

East Lothian Partnership

Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2026-2036

Discussion Facilitation Guide

Discussion resources for use with any settings where they would help!



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Introduction for Facilitators

Local Outcome Improvement Plan Development 2026-2036

East Lothian Partnership are developing their new Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP). This is required by Section 6 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 [Link](#). This plan concentrates on what we, as partners, can achieve by working together on specific issues to improve outcomes for East Lothian's people.

The LOIP must set out:

- the local outcomes which are a priority for the area, and what will be done to achieve these outcomes;
- what will improve because we have achieved these outcomes;
- the time period during which we plan to make this improvement;
- a description of the needs and circumstances of the people who live in East Lothian.

There are many plans and strategies influencing change in East Lothian. The LOIP is not intended to be a “master plan” for the area or a silver bullet. But it will be influence (and be influenced by) other plans, strategies and activities.

What is East Lothian Partnership?

East Lothian Partnership are a community planning partnership. Community planning is about how public bodies work together, and with local communities, to design and deliver better services that make a real difference to people's lives. Especially those who need the services most.

Who is in the East Lothian Partnership?

The East Lothian Partnership involves all partners, organisations and community groups. The structure of the East Lothian Partnership is below;



The East Lothian Partnership updated its structure in January 2018 with the aim of actively involving more partners and community groups in its work. The structure includes:

- **East Lothian Partnership Governance Group** whose core membership includes the 5 partners who have statutory responsibility for governance under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
- **East Lothian Partnership Forum** which brings together a wide range of partners with the aim of actively involving them in the Partnership's work

- **A number of Strategic / Delivery Groups** who play a role in delivering the outcomes in the East Lothian Plan - these include East Lothian's 6 Area Partnerships

What you need to know: the background context

The Strategic Needs Assessment helps us understand some of the problems and opportunities in East Lothian. Here are some important points:

Population Growth East Lothian's population is growing fast, especially people aged 65 and over. Most care workers are over 45 years old. By 2043, almost half of the current care workers will have retired.

Deprivation 1 in 5 children in East Lothian live in poverty. Eight areas in East Lothian are among the poorest in Scotland. Even in richer areas, some people still struggle with poverty. In poorer areas, people often have shorter lives and face more health, social, and money problems.

Finances East Lothian Council, NHS Lothian, and other organizations have money problems. East Lothian Council needs to cut £60 million over the next five years. The cost-of-living crisis means more people need help, but it's also more expensive to provide services. This often leads to fewer services and longer waiting times.

Partners preparing for engagement

This guide seeks to support partners in gaining the views and opinions of the communities they support, with some resources and background information.

Things to consider

- ✓ If you have regular sessions with the people you support, rather than setting up a separate session you may wish to use the resources as an activity in your time together.
- ✓ You can decide on the best format to engage with the group, based on your own trusting relationship. You may want to use flipcharts, post it notes, drawings or even voice recordings to make it more informal and accessible. The resources in this pack are just a guide.
- ✓ If you are running a session please do try to share information at least 48 hours in advance, including the East Lothian Partnership Information for Communities/ East Lothian Partnership Information for Children and Young Person and an overview for the session.
- ✓ Check whether any participants have accessibility requirements, or other adaptations that will help them to participate fully.
- ✓ Identify an accessible location for the engagement, including access to a safe/quiet space.
- ✓ We have tried to provide documents in accessible formats, written in plain English that is youth friendly.
- ✓ Consider who is taking part in the conversation, and how best to engage voices easy to ignore
- ✓ For working with children and young people you can refer to; [Lundy Model](#), [Save the Children -](#) , [The Right Way](#), [UNICEF](#), [Lundy Model Checklist](#) for more resources.

Trauma-informed

It is also worth considering that some themes being discussed may trigger a personal experience. Sharing information prior to the session on what will be covered will help people to consider/prepare for this.

Consider how you can support them at the sessions and what support you may want to put them in touch with afterwards.

A good practice is to prepare with your group some conversation guidelines that can help create a safe space. Some things to consider include:

- Have a soft start – tea, coffee and getting to know each other at the beginning of the session can help people feel more at ease and can help transition if people have had a stressful day beforehand.
- Having a breakout room where people can go to collect their thoughts.
- Language – no professional speak or acronyms, it's ok to ask what people mean and check that we have an agreed understanding of the words/phrases that we are using.
- Throughout the session check in with each other as you are sharing experiences, thoughts and ideas that might not be easy for others to hear.
- Provide an overview of what we are going to be doing before the session.
- Make space for reflection and learning.
- It's ok to get things wrong and make mistakes.
- Be mindful that people coming into a space to share their experience could find it intimidating.
- Think about where the power sits, we want to have power balance and power in balance.
- Keep the conversation we have about individuals experiences anonymous and think about confidentiality.
- Provide a summary at the end of the discussion.

On the day

Tips for introducing the workshop/activity

- Ask everyone to introduce themselves by sharing their preferred name, and if they feel comfortable sharing their pronouns and visual description and why they are here today, which can help with inclusivity.
- Tell people how long the session will take, if there will be comfort/refreshment breaks and the timings for the session. Give any venue information on toilets etc.
- Ask people to be sure that they are willing for the anonymous feedback they give to be shared with the East Lothian Partnership for the purposes of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan consultation and engagement.
- If it is a more formal session, appoint a note-taker to record people's ideas. If working with a larger group consider splitting down into smaller groups/tables to give opportunities for everyone to speak, including offering people who don't want to share verbally alternative ways to share their views.
- This is about what we can do **as a partnership**. Whilst some agencies will play a leading role, please guide discussion towards collective actions.
- We will be keeping people updated on the progress and shaping of the LOIP. If participants would like to hear more, please provide their email addresses to Emma Brown ebrown3@eastlothian.gov.uk or Lucy Higginson lhigginson@eastlothian.gov.uk.

Activities for different age groups

We have created two different facilitation packs; a creative pack which may be better for children and young people and other appropriate settings, and a discursive pack, which focuses more around questions. Please pick the pack or indeed activity that suits your group best, and feel free to draw on elements of both. You can change or amend resources as you feel they best suit you. You only need to use one of the activities

How many themes/questions do you have to cover?

That is entirely up to you. You may want to focus on one theme/question that is of particular interest to your group, several questions or all of them. You may like to do one session or a series of sessions looking at particular themes/questions. You may move completely away from the questions and themes, and that is also okay.

We are hoping for feedback from your discussion by **16th May** to elp@eastlothian.gov.uk.

Thinking about the bigger picture

This is a big conversation that will have a lasting impact on East Lothian Partnership's focus and activities over the next 10 years. It will influence how services in your community work together for many years to come.

As part of the review of the 2017-2027 LOIP and self-assessment of our partnership, we have identified that the ways in which we are currently working need to evolve. The themes and actions that we need to take will also evolve. Our Strategic Needs Assessment is provided with this pack and sets out some of the emerging and more pressing themes or concerns in East Lothian.

Below, we have set out some questions that delve further into themes that have emerged from our review of the previous LOIP and conversations with the Partnership.

This is an important opportunity for participants or the groups they represent to have their say. If the discussion moves away from these questions and themes, we are happy to hear where the conversation takes you, and what the priorities are for the communities you speak to.

Ending the session

- Summarise the key points from the session
- Let people know that the recording sheet/picture/post its etc. reflecting what people have said at the workshop will be sent on to the East Lothian Partnership so that it can be included in the list of ideas that will inform the development of the new Local Outcome Improvement Plan.
- Try to return your feedback by 16th May.
- There will be a draft of the themes of the plan ready for June 2025, which they can give further feedback on. We will also be meeting with workers and professionals to complete another set of Impact Assessments, to check if any other focus groups are needed for groups and views that may have been missed.
- The final draft should be ready for December 2025.
- A full timeline is included in the Strategic Needs Assessment (included in your packs). If people have more ideas that they would like to share outside of this meeting, please ask them to email them to us at elp@eastlothian.gov.uk
- We will be sending out regular updates on emerging themes and progress and we would be happy to share them with anyone who would like them. Again, please ask them to email us at elp@eastlothian.gov.uk
- Finally, please say a big thank you from us for everyone giving up their time and sharing their ideas.

Thank you

East Lothian Partnership Information for Communities

East Lothian Partnership are developing their new Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP). This is required by Section 6 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. This plan concentrates on what we, as partners, can achieve by working together on specific issues to improve outcomes for East Lothian's people.

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Community Planning

Community planning is about how public bodies work together, and with local communities, to design and deliver better services that make a real difference to people's lives. Especially those who need the services most.

The East Lothian Partnership is our Community Planning Partnership (or CPP). A CPP is the name given to all those services that come together to take part in community planning. Each CPP focuses on where partners' collective efforts and resources can add the most value to their local communities, with particular emphasis on reducing inequality. [Read more](#)

Who is the East Lothian Partnership?

The East Lothian Partnership is a group of organisations from across public, private, third and community sectors.

- East Lothian Council
- NHS Lothian
- Police Scotland
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Scottish Enterprise
- Third Sector (Volunteer Centre East Lothian)
- Higher Education (Including Edinburgh College, Queen Margaret University)
- Area Partnerships (Musselburgh, Preston Seton Gosford, Fa'side, Haddington and Lammermuirs, North Berwick Coastal, Dunbar & East Linton).
- Strategic Partnerships (Children's Strategic Partnership, Connected Economy Group, Community Justice, Community Safety, East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel and Association of East Lothian Community Councils).

What are we going to be talking about?

Over the next few months, the East Lothian Partnership will be engaging with communities on what they want to see from their LOIP. This will build on conversations that we have already started. We have summarised these conversations into three themes that have been highlighted as important to our communities.

- **The Economy** – how do we promote fair work, volunteering, and a thriving economy? This discussion includes how we have a workforce that can meet the future needs of the community; what we do in partnership around large strategic sites; and how we tackle in-work poverty.
- **Tackling Inequalities** – reducing poverty and health inequalities are a key priority. Included in this discussion is addressing the mental health crisis, taking an early intervention and prevention approach, and discussing how we build resilient communities.
- **Climate and infrastructure** – how we adapt as a county to climate change is a key priority over the next 10 years, alongside adapting to a growing and changing population. Housing, transport and energy infrastructure are all key priorities for communities.

Icebreaker – East Lothian Time Machine...

This plan will cover activities in East Lothian over the next 10 years. A lot can change in this time.

FACILITATION GUIDE

Purpose

Aim: To use our collective imaginations to bring to life the future that may yet be possible in order to inform the new East Lothian Plan.

Key Points for Facilitation:

- It is fine for there to be multiple visions; they can potentially co-exist with each other.
- We need to cultivate, in our groups, a culture of 'Yes, And' rather than 'Yes, But'.
- Seek out the ways that different visions could complement each other.

Steps

1. Share a bit about the East Lothian Partnership and the East Lothian Plan (Local Outcome Improvement Plan), explaining why you've gathered people together to get their views.
2. Explain that you'll be leading participants through a visualisation activity to help them reflect on what is important to them. Share the aim.
3. Run through the following guided visioning process to 'travel to 2036.' This will take about 10-15 minutes.
4. Facilitate discussion or ask participants to write down and/or draw what they visualised. What needs to be done to achieve this future?
5. Wrap up by thanking participants and reminding them how their ideas will inform the new East Lothian Plan.

Time Machine Activity Script

Together we are going to take a journey through time. We are going to create a vision for what East Lothian could look like in 2036: for our children, grandchildren, friends, neighbours, ourselves, our natural world..... to go on a journey, to one possible future, guided by this process and your imagination.

I'd like you to suspend any disbelief and imagine that we've just invented the world's first time machine. When I turn it on, we are going to travel forward to 2036.

I invite everyone to get comfy, and if you feel comfortable, close your eyes. You can also look down or find a spot in the room to focus on.

I want everyone to think about a place where you feel at home in East Lothian. The place where you feel alive and happy.

I am now turning the time machine on, and I want you now to imagine us travelling through time and opening a door, a door to East Lothian in 2036. Let's step out, emerging blinking into this new world.

A lot has happened in the past 11 years.

It's not a utopia... we still face some collective challenges...but this new world is the result of everything that could possibly have been done being done to make East Lothian a happier, healthier, safer and more prosperous place to live. Take a walk around it in your imagination using all your senses.

What is the first thing that you notice that tells you this is a different world?

(Ask following questions very slowly, with plenty of time in between for people to really imagine)

- What do you see as you walk around?
- What sounds do you hear?
- What does it smell like, feel like, taste like?
- What are people doing for work and leisure?
- What has happened for it to be as it is?
- How does East Lothian in 2036 feel?

Now we're going to leave this place, taking away a sense of what's possible and what's important. Let's get back in our time machine and travel back to 2025. When you are ready, open your eyes and reconnect to the people you are with today.

Gathering Ideas









After bringing everyone back to the present moment, you can collect ideas in a number of ways depending on what works best for the group. Some ideas are to:

- Allow people some time to write down or draw ideas, feelings, or key visions. What was important to them in the future they imagined?
 - If comfortable, they can share back with the larger group.
- Pair people up or put people into small groups to discuss what they envisioned.

It is good to not only ask participants what they envisioned our future looking like, but what needs to be done to get there.

Main activity – My Place

This activity uses the Place Standard tool. Box 1 introduces the theme and the main question. Further questions are in Box 2 – you do not have to ask every question, but they are there if you need them. Ask participants to rate the theme and question on a scale from 1 to 7 in Box 3. 1 is very poor, 7 is very good. In Box 4 note the positives that emerge from the conversation. In Box 5, the things that need to be changed and improved.

<p>Box 1</p>  <p>Work and local economy How active is the local economy in my place and are there good opportunities for work, volunteering and training?</p>	<p>Box 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an active local economy? (able to spend locally (shop/ eat/ drink), mix of businesses, including local and community-owned, opening days/ times) • Is there work available in the local area for those that want it? (a mix of jobs, paid work and volunteering, temporary and permanent, seasonal and part time positions) • Are there opportunities for people to build skills? (education, training or retraining, community work, local or accessible nearby) • What support is available? (for people with different needs, employment advice, starting and growing a business, childcare, travel) • Are there any challenges? (pollution, noise, reliance on a few major employers, broadband, working conditions, closed businesses) <p>How does the local economy affect how I feel about my place? (thriving or declining, lots of activity or empty streets, boarded up or attractive buildings?)</p>
<p>Box 3</p> <p>Please rate the place on a scale from 1 to 7</p> <div style="text-align: right; border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Copy and paste me</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #ccc;">  1 </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #ccc;">  2 </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #ccc;">  3 </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #ccc;">  4 </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #ccc;">  5 </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #ccc;">  6 </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #ccc;">  7 </div> </div>	
<p>Box 4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">What is good now?</p>	<p>Box 5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">How could we make it better in the future?</p>



Moving around

How easy is it to move around and get to where I want to go?

- Are paths and routes suitable? Are routes attractive and safe? (walk, wheel, or cycle, adapted bikes, good surfaces, well-lit)
- Are there enough routes for people to get to where they want to go? Are there options for lower carbon travel? (shops, school, work, parks, public transport)
- Can everyone use them? Are there any barriers? (all ages and mobility, vision/ hearing impaired, pushchairs and prams, mobility aids, bikes)
- Do people have priority over vehicles? (traffic calming measures, good pedestrian routes, safe road crossing points)
- How does traffic affect people? (congestion, speed, pollution, noise, fear of vehicles or bicycles, delivery vehicles)
- What impact does parking have? (on walking, wheeling and cycling, accessibility of pavements, attractiveness of the area)

Please rate the place on a scale from 1 to 7



1



2



3



4



5



6



7

What is good now?

How could we make it better in the future?



Play and recreation
How good are the spaces and opportunities for play and recreation in my place?

- What opportunities are there? (play, sports, culture, arts, leisure)
- Are there places that everyone can enjoy? (children and young people, adults and older people, non-disabled and disabled, vision/ hearing impaired, locals and visitors)
- Are spaces and facilities well used? (easy to get to, free or affordable, safe and well maintained, fun and welcoming, different times of day or year)
- How else could we make the most of what we have? (streets close to home, vacant and derelict land, playgrounds, natural spaces, libraries and public buildings, hosting activities and events)
- Are there any issues? (access, location, lighting, noise, cost, public toilets, traffic, weather, play not welcomed by the community)

Please rate the place on a scale from 1 to 7



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7

What is good now?

How could we make it better in the future?



Public transport

What is public transport like in my place?

- Is public transport a good option? (safe and convenient, frequent and reliable, affordable, clean and comfortable, easy to change between services)
- Can everyone use services? (wheelchairs, prams, vision/ hearing impaired, cyclists, all weathers, all times)
- Do facilities and services have what people need? (toilets, seating, shelter from weather, visual/ audio help points, green/ low emissions, cycle storage, car parking)
- Is there information on services? (easy to find, easy to use, clear and accessible)
- Does the public transport system allow people to get to where they need to go if they can't get there by walking, wheeling or cycling? (health centre, shops, to meet friends, parks)

Please rate the place on a scale from 1 to 7



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What is good now?

How could we make it better in the future?



Natural Space
How easy is it for me to regularly enjoy natural space?

- What kind of natural spaces are there? (welcoming, easy to get to, accessible, safe and secure, well-connected, meets my needs)
- Can everyone use the spaces? (disabled people, dog walking, prams and buggies, walking and cycling, local food growing, playing, places to rest)
- Are spaces looked after? (clean, safe, in good order, community volunteers)
- What stops people using spaces? (litter, noise, dog fouling, surface mud/ dirt, air quality, flooding, no seating, overcrowding, no toilets)
- How can natural spaces work better for us? (drainage, rewilding, protect and encourage wildlife and nature, tree planting, cleaner air, shade)

Please rate the place on a scale from 1 to 7



1



2



3



4



5



6



7

What is good now?

How could we make it better in the future?



Facilities and services
How well do facilities and services in my place meet my needs?

- What facilities and services are there? (schools and education, health facilities, social care, shops, library and culture, community centres and halls, recycling and repair, healthy food, leisure, gas, electricity and water)
- What other support is available? (charities and clubs, welfare support, community food groups, places of worship, housing and employment advice)
- Do the facilities and services meet local needs, now and in the future? (affordable, all ages, different needs and abilities, responsive to emergencies)
- Are facilities and services easy to get to and use? (within a reasonable walking, wheeling or cycling distance, for disabled people, available online, linked to other services)
- Are there other barriers for people? (unwelcoming, limited healthy choices, language, internet access)

Please rate the place on a scale from 1 to 7



1



2



3



4



5



6



7

What is good now?

How could we make it better in the future?



Housing and community

How well do the homes in my place meet the needs of my community?

- Is there a good mix of housing types? (different sizes, various prices, privately owned, rented, specialist housing, supported living, multi-generational)
- Are residential areas attractive? (well maintained homes, private and community gardens, well laid out, communal areas)
- Are homes and places able to adapt to changing circumstances? (changing climate, population changes, global health challenges, energy efficiency)
- Is there a good community spirit? (local activities and events, friendly neighbours, welcoming neighbourhoods, intergenerational mixing)
- Are there any challenges? (damp/ draughty homes, secure boundaries, flooding, noise and disturbance, homelessness, anti-social behaviour, no storage)

Please rate the place on a scale from 1 to 7



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7

What is good now?

How could we make it better in the future?



Social interaction

How good is the range of opportunities which allow me to meet and spend time with other people?

- Where do people get together? (local halls and centres, schools, places of worship, food and drink outlets, streets, outdoor seating, online)
- How do people find out what's happening? (friends/ family/ neighbours, social media, advertising and posters, local radio and newspapers)
- Can everyone join in and mix? (accessible, friendly, inclusive, welcoming, free or affordable, digital access and skills)
- Is there a mix of activities? (indoor and outdoor groups, kids clubs and pensioner clubs, community activities, events, specialist groups)
- Would people come together in a crisis? (networks, support groups, resources)
- Are there any gaps? (type of activities, type of spaces, use of spaces)

Please rate the place on a scale from 1 to 7



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7

What is good now?

How could we make it better in the future?



Identity and belonging
To what extent does my place have a positive identity that supports a strong sense of belonging?

- How strong is the sense of identity and belonging? (pride, neighbourliness, traditions, local groups)
- How does the community celebrate? (history/ heritage/ arts/ music/ culture, sports, public events, social media, our uniqueness, our inclusiveness)
- How involved are people in the community? (volunteering, sharing experiences, support networks, different groups, come together in a crisis)
- How welcoming are people in this place? (friendliness, tolerance and openness, all ages and ethnicities, for disabled people, language, culture)
- What do others think of the place and community? (reputation, profile, community)

Please rate the place on a scale from 1 to 7



1



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3



4



5











6



7

What is good now?

How could we make it better in the future?

 <p>Feeling safe How safe does my place make me feel?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does everyone feel safe in our place? (daytime, evening and night-time, children and teenagers, adults and older people, women) • Are there physical barriers or areas that feel unsafe? (lighting, derelict buildings, empty homes, vacant land, flooding, clean/ clear paths, flooding) • Are there social issues? (freedom of speech, anti-social behaviour, hate crime, inequality, lack of diversity) • How do we share our concerns? (neighbourhood watch, reporting crime, social media) • Are there other issues? (litter and graffiti, hidden or unreported crimes, unsafe at specific times/ certain places, traffic speed and volume)
<p>Please rate the place on a scale from 1 to 7</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid #ccc;">  1 </div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid #ccc;">  2 </div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid #ccc;">  3 </div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid #ccc;">  4 </div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid #ccc;">  5 </div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid #ccc;">  6 </div> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid #ccc;">  7 </div> </div>	
<p>What is good now?</p>	<p>How could we make it better in the future?</p>



Care and maintenance
How well is my place looked after and cared for?

- Are buildings, streets and spaces maintained? (clean and safe, quick repairs, loved and cared for, accessible to everyone)
- Who helps to maintain our place? (council, community, businesses, others)
- Are there any challenges? (litter and fly-tipping, vandalism, pavement surfaces, changes to services, flooding, extreme weather)
- Do we report issues? (who to, online or to a person, is it easy, how responsive, does this lead to action)
- What are local services like? (cleaning, recycling, property maintenance)

Please rate the place on a scale from 1 to 7



1



2



3



4



5











6



7

What is good now?

How could we make it better in the future?

 <p>Streets and spaces What are the buildings, streets and public spaces like in my place?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are streets and spaces like? (welcoming, distinctive, pleasant, accessible, fun, sheltered, shaded, places to rest, adaptable) • Are there points of interest? (local landmarks, historic features, public squares, parks and gardens, trees) • Is it easy to find my way around? (good surfaces, visual features, well signposted, direct and easy routes to follow) • How accessible are spaces for everyone? (pavement width, crossing points, tactile surfaces, dropped kerbs) • Are there any challenges? (flooding, derelict buildings, vacant land, pollution, litter, lighting, busy roads, pavement clutter, illegal parking)
<p>Please rate the place on a scale from 1 to 7</p> <div data-bbox="302 699 1930 786"> <div>  1 </div> <div>  2 </div> <div>  3 </div> <div>  4 </div> <div>  5 </div> <div>  6 </div> <div>  7 </div> </div>	
<p>What is good now?</p>	<p>How could we make it better in the future?</p>



Influence and sense of control
When things happen in my place how well am I listened to and included in decision-making?

- Does the community have a voice? (confidence to take part, getting involved, influencing decisions, doing things ourselves, do we know and successfully exercise our rights)
- Is the community listened to? (are our needs understood, who do we talk to, how are we consulted, more or less consultation)
- Are there effective local groups? (community council, residents' association, business groups, charities or lobby groups, building/ user forums, social media)
- Do I feel able to take action on my own or with neighbours? (litter picking, local improvements, working together to take action)
- Are there barriers for some people? (clear language, online/ digital tools, hearing/ vision needs, disabled people, can everyone take part)

Please rate the place on a scale from 1 to 7



1



2



3



4



5



6



7

What is good now?

How could we make it better in the future?

Theme 1: The Economy; *including volunteering, workforce development, Community Wealth Building*

Background

There are lots of strengths to East Lothian's economy, including:

- A rapidly growing and well-educated population.
- A high-quality reputation for its food and drink offer, and attractive visitor destinations.
- Natural resources and infrastructure that make the area well placed to target opportunities in renewable energy.
- Several nationally and regionally important strategic development sites.
- High quality east-west transport links.
- An active and engaged private and third sector.

However we also face challenges, including:

- A shortage of technical skills.
- An aging population.
- Low business productivity.
- Poor rural and north-south transport links, and limits on development in rural areas.
- A shortage of high-quality commercial properties and immediately available business expansion land.
- **East Lothian has a high employment rate, with unemployment at just 1.7%.** A large proportion of those employed work in small businesses. Hospitality, Catering, Event Management and Tourism are key industries and employers. East Lothian Council, NHS Lothian and the Health and Social Care Partnership are also key employers in the area.
- **People commuting out of East Lothian earn more than people employed locally.** This is largely driven by high earners commuting to work in Edinburgh and elsewhere.
- **East Lothian's rural settlements could offer significant economic potential.** Particularly in tourism, professional service sectors, and the development of new Small and Medium Enterprises. Hybrid working offers new opportunities in these communities. However, limited public transport provision, employment space and broadband connectivity remain barriers.
- **Limited available office, retail and industrial space but significant amount of undeveloped employment land:** Whilst 97% of employment space is currently occupied, 59% of the local authority's total employment land is currently undeveloped. Many rural areas have vacant buildings and unutilised land that are suitable for repurposing.
- The top three priorities for improvement to the neighbourhood in the Residents Survey 2023 were **road and pavement repairs (75%)**, health services (55%) and activities for teenagers (33%). The proportion of respondents stating **road and pavement repairs as a priority for improvement has increased from 53% in 2021.**

Theme 2: Reducing inequalities; *reducing poverty and health inequalities*

Background

- **One in five children in East Lothian are living in relative poverty.** 393 households were in temporary accommodation in 2022-23, including 150 children. 1,908 pensioners claim Pension Credit in East Lothian; we use this figure to estimate the number of pensioners struggling financially.

- **The cost of living crisis is affecting the wellbeing of people living in Scotland.** The latest YouGov findings (December 2024) show, just under one third of respondents (31%) believe their physical health has been negatively affected by the crisis and 43% believe their mental health has been negatively affected. These figures are considerably higher for people managing less well financially.
- **Tackling food poverty.** There is some evidence that there has been a decrease in food and financial donations to food banks over the course of the cost of living crisis which has coincided with a period of increased demand for food banks. Food prices are limiting peoples' ability to buy healthy foods for their household and it is estimated that up to one in seven are sometimes having to skip meals.
- **Living in poverty decreases average life expectancy by 8 years.** In the 2024 Residents Survey, health services were a priority improvement for 55% of respondents. Obesity, falls in people aged 65+, and the number of people with long-term care needs receiving personal care at home, have all increased in the last 4 years. Mental health is a big concern and demand for these services is high. Suicide has increased by 23% in the past 4 years.
- The top three priorities for improvement to the neighbourhood in the 2023 Residents Survey were road and pavement repairs (75%), **health services (55%)** and **activities for teenagers (33%)**.

Theme 3: Adapting to the future; *including climate change, community safety, housing, and population growth*

Background

- **House prices are above the Scotland average, and growing faster:** House prices in East Lothian are above the Scottish average (£312,986 v £217,396) and are rising faster (56% over 10-years in East Lothian, over the past decade, compared to 39% across Scotland). The affordability ratio for East Lothian, 7.1, also sits above the Scottish average of 5.4.
- **Pressure from national infrastructure development:** Rural communities face pressure and significant negative impact from the development of national infrastructure, e.g. electricity infrastructure and battery storage systems that are given preferential development approval over the development of locally owned renewable schemes, and commercial / business developments.
- **Adapting to climate change:** Climate change is already affecting us, and we must adapt to sustain our livelihoods. Scotland is experiencing average temperatures about 1.5 degrees Celsius above last century's average and this is causing hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters. Globally, climate change is increasing the frequency, severity, and duration of extreme weather events. These events cause migration of people and disruption to global supply chains. In East Lothian, the most prevalent climate risks we are already experiencing locally are flooding, coastal erosion, and heat.
- **Community Safety:** Whilst there is a perception by members of the public that Anti-Social Behaviour and crime is growing, figures show a reduction in some areas. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service responded to 585 incidents in East Lothian (1st October 2023 – 31st March 2024), this is a decrease of 191 incidents compared with the same reporting period last year. In protecting the most vulnerable people domestics bail offences increased by 26% whilst missing person reduced by 17% on 5-year average. In reducing violence and antisocial behaviour there has been an 81% reduction in Hate crime and a 49% increase in serious assaults from the 5 year average. Overall there was a 13% increase in crime recorded in Police Scotland's East Lothian report March 23-April 24. Serious organised crime by drug supply increased by 33%, Housebreak increased by 14% and acquisition crime increased by 20% on the 5-year average.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/understanding-cost-living-crisis-scotland/pages/1/>

Our money

- The 2021 to 2023 cost of living crisis was the most serious price rise (inflationary) shock to affect Scotland since the early 1980s.
- Women, disabled people, ethnic minorities, rural households, larger households, young people, students and carers, lone parents and single person households, households in receipt of income-related benefits, people narrowly ineligible for benefits, and people with no ability to access benefits were particularly badly affected. Some households will have a number of these characteristics, potentially making the disadvantage worse

Our health

- The cost-of-living crisis is likely to have increased the demand for services at the same time as increasing the cost of delivering services. This means often, there are less service available and longer waiting lists.
- There is evidence from a wide variety of sources including the Scottish Government's YouGov survey and the Understanding Scotland survey^[60] that the cost of living crisis is affecting the wellbeing of people living in Scotland. The latest YouGov findings (December 2024) show, just under one third of respondents (31%) believe their physical health has been negatively affected by the crisis and 43% believe their mental health has been negatively affected.
- Polling data^[119] from Scotland from December 2024 shows that 43% respondents have said that the cost of living has negatively affected their mental health and around a third of respondents have said it has negatively affected their physical health. These figures are considerably higher for people managing less well financially.

Our businesses

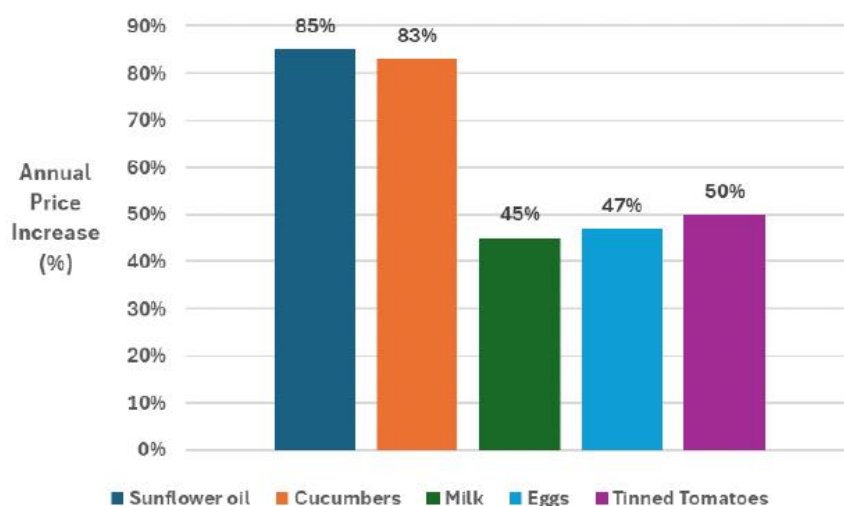
- The sharp increase in energy and materials prices presented significant challenges for businesses, following on almost directly from the Covid-19 pandemic. Businesses responded to increased costs in several ways - by adjusting their prices, absorbing costs through reduced profits, and / or seeking to improve efficiency or reduce other operational costs. Many businesses simply had to shut down or make staff redundant to reduce costs.

Our Work

- Analysis conducted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation as part of their Poverty in Scotland 2023 report^[111] found that just over 10% of workers in Scotland are locked in persistent low-pay (i.e. they are paid below the real Living Wage) and 72% of people within this group are women.

Our Food

- There is some evidence that there has been a decrease in food and financial donations to food banks over the course of the cost of living crisis which has coincided with a period of increased demand for food banks.
- At points between May 2023 and March 2024 (May, August, December and March), survey data shows that around 40% of people agreed that food prices are limiting their ability to buy healthy foods for their household and one in seven are sometimes having to skip meals.
- Annual food price rise (inflation) reached 19.2% in March 2023, the highest rate of increase in food prices since 1977^[11]. The number of Scots reporting cutting back on essentials such as food peaked at 24% in February 2023 before falling to 15% by December 2024. In December 2022, 62% of households who said that they were managing less well financially^[12] reported cutting back on essentials such as food^[13]. Some food categories rose in price faster than others. Some of the foods subject to the biggest annual increases, such as sunflower oil (up 85%), cucumbers (up 83%) and dairy products are set out in figure 5 below.



Our Utilities

- People on low incomes often end up paying more for essential goods and services. This is sometimes referred to as the 'poverty premium'. Examples of this include the increased likelihood that low income households will be reliant on more expensive pre-payment meters, will be unable to move to the best fuel tariffs, and will be unable to access consumer credit.^[21]

Our community

- Volunteer numbers fell during the pandemic (continuing a gradual downward trend since 2010) and haven't since recovered (although it is unclear whether this is connected to the cost of living). This fall in volunteering has increased demand on public sources of formal support.
- There is some evidence of the impact of cost-of-living crisis on the increase in types of crime. i.e. shoplifting, up by 25% in the year ending September 2024, when compared to the previous year (from 33,789 to 42,271 crimes)^[116], as well as property and violent crime due to low wages and domestic abuse.