



A Guide to Community Participation Opportunities

Getting Involved,
Making Your Voice
Heard

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Introduction

East Lothian Council's Vision is for an East Lothian that is even more prosperous, safe and sustainable, with a dynamic and thriving economy that enables our people and communities to flourish.

Community Participation makes an important contribution towards achieving this Vision. When we talk about community participation we are referring to ways in which individuals and communities can get involved in shaping the things that affect their lives, including the provision of services by the Council.

This Guide provides information on the many opportunities that exist for communities and individuals to engage with the Council to help develop and enhance vibrant and cohesive community life.

There are three sections in this Guide covering:

- (i) [General Participation Opportunities](#)
- (ii) [Participation Opportunities with Specific Council Services](#)
- (iii) [The Community Empowerment Act](#)

General Participation Opportunities

Councillors

There are 22 Councillors in East Lothian who are responsible for agreeing policies about the provision of services and how the Council's money is spent. Councillors are elected by East Lothian residents who are eligible to vote at Council elections which usually take place every four years.

Local Councillors are there to represent their local communities. They also have a responsibility to help individuals with difficulties that the Council may be able to assist with.

You can contact your Councillor by phone, email or post or you can go along to one of their surgeries. Surgeries provide an opportunity to talk to your councillor face to face and take place in local venues at regular intervals.

[Find out about your local Councillor, their contact details and surgery arrangements here.](#)

Community Councils

Community Councils are the most local tier of statutory representation in Scotland. Community Councils are made up of local people and play a key role in representing the views of the local community to the Council and other public sector organisations.

Community Councils often also get involved in things like fundraising, organising community events and other activities aimed at benefitting the local community.

Elections to Community Councils take place every 4 years. Casual vacancies can occur between elections when elected members resign or leave, Community Councils are responsible for filling these vacancies themselves.

You can become involved with your local Community Council by:

- Attending one of its regular public meetings
- Contacting them by phone, email or letter
- Becoming a Community Council member

[Contact details for local Community Councils.](#)

Elections

Registered voters can vote at Council, Scottish Parliament, UK Parliament, European Parliament and Community Council elections. You can find out about these elections via the [Election page](#) on our website. [You can check whether you are registered to vote by contacting the Electoral Register Officer.](#)

Area Partnerships

Six [Area Partnerships](#) were set up across East Lothian in 2014 to be the “local voice” of [East Lothian Partnership](#). Area Partnerships provide an opportunity for local communities to influence service planning and delivery in their area.

East Lothian Area Partnership
Locations



Area Partnerships develop Local Plans based on local knowledge and the needs and aspirations of the local community.

Members of Area Partnerships include local Councillors, representatives of Community Councils, Tenants and Residents Associations and Parent Councils. Other key local groups are also represented (this varies according to the area).

The Council devolves part of its annual budget to Area Partnerships, **in 2016/17, this allocation amounted to £1.85 million.** Each Area Partnership makes decisions on how best to use their part of the allocation to deliver local projects and initiatives.

You can get involved in your Area Partnership as a representative of one of the groups listed above or as someone with an interest in one of the Area Partnership's sub groups. You can find out more by emailing areapartnership@eastlothian.gov.uk

East Lothian Citizens' Panel

The East Lothian Citizens' Panel is made up of around 1,200 local people who have signed up to take part in regular surveys to help inform the work of East Lothian Council and other public sector partners including the Police, Fire and Rescue Service and Health Services. Panel members are also occasionally invited to take part in other activities such as focus groups and workshops.

Panel membership is open to anyone aged 16 or over living in East Lothian. [Find out more, including how to sign up as a member.](#)



Residents Reviews

Residents Reviews are a new approach which we've been developing to encourage local people to have their say in relation to services that we provide.

Residents Reviews involve a small group of volunteers exploring how we deliver a specific service. During the process the volunteer Review Team gathers evidence on the service through site visits, interviews, group discussions and the examination of service data. Feedback from the Review Team then forms the basis of a report which highlights both positive and negative aspects of the service and includes a set of recommendations.

Up until now, Residents Review volunteers have been recruited via the Citizens Panel, however, we are, looking to open up this opportunity to other local people. If you are interested in finding out more email consultations@eastlothian.gov.uk



The East Lothian Consultation Hub

You can find out about consultation / engagement exercises that might interest you by visiting the East Lothian Consultation Hub. The Hub contains information on consultations run by East

Lothian Council, but also on some of those run by organisations such as the Police, Fire & Rescue and Health Services.

We report the outcomes of consultation / engagement exercises on the Hub in the 'We Asked, You Said, We Did' section.

[Visit the East Lothian Consultation Hub.](#)

You Pay, Have Your Say – Annual Budget Consultation

For a number of years the Council has carried out a community consultation exercise prior to setting its budget. This consultation exercise gives local people an opportunity to set out their own priorities when it comes to providing local services and facilities.

We carried out [our more recent budget consultation](#) in late 2016 / early 2017. When a budget consultation is underway you can find out more and take part via our [Consultation Hub](#).

Petitions

Local residents or organisations can raise petitions relating to:

- Council services or activities, or
- The general wellbeing of the East Lothian community

A Petitions Committee usually meets four times a year to consider petitions.

[Find out more about Petitions.](#)

Comments, Complaints & Compliments

If you have a comment, complaint or compliment in relation to any of the services we provide you can let us know by contacting our Feedback Team. [You can do this over the phone, online or in writing.](#)

We use the feedback we receive to help us to improve our service provision.

The East Lothian Council website also allows members of the public to report a variety of issues online through the '[Report it](#)' section. Issues you can report include fly tipping, broken street lights, road faults and antisocial behaviour.

Residents Survey

The Council has carried out a number of large scale Residents Surveys. The most recent survey took place in early 2017. The 2017 survey gathered the views of around 1,500 local residents on a range of issues through face to face interviews in their homes.

Volunteering

Volunteering is one way in which many people get involved in their local communities. There are many and varied opportunities for people to volunteer in East Lothian – you can find out about these via the [STRIVE website](#).

The Council itself benefits from the contribution that volunteers make in relation to a number of its activities; there are examples of these throughout this guide.

Involving volunteers not only helps enhance what the Council can provide, but also offers a valuable opportunity to engage with individuals and communities.

Social Media

We currently use social media in a number of ways to share news and information. We are looking to develop our use of social media further so that we can use it more effectively to engage with local people and communities.

[Find out how we use social media including Facebook and Twitter here.](#)



Participation Opportunities with Specific Services

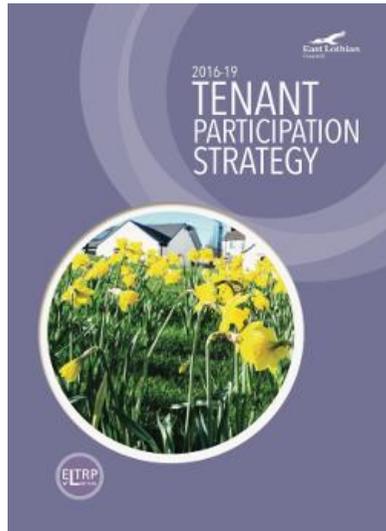
Housing

Tenant Participation

We are fully committed to ensuring that tenants can get involved and actively influence the services we deliver.

There are a range of options for tenants to get involved either as individuals or as part of a tenants and residents group or through the East Lothian Tenants & Residents Panel. There is a very active tenants' movement in East Lothian which has been developed in partnership with the East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP).

Since the introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter we have also been developing opportunities for tenants to get involved in scrutiny activity.



You can read more about the [opportunities for tenant participation](#) on our website. Or get in touch by email tenantconsultation@eastlothian.gov.uk or telephone 01 620 827 526.

East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel

East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP) is the independent umbrella organisation for tenants and residents groups in East Lothian. They promote and represent the rights of tenants and tenants in East Lothian. You can get more information about ELTRP on their website www.eltrp.co.uk or contact them by email tenantspanel@hotmail.com or telephone 0131 665 9304.

Children & Families

[East Lothian Partnership's Children and Young People's Services Plan](#) outlines the Council and other partners' commitment to involving children and young people. The Plan itself was developed in close consultation with children, young people and families.

In 2015, the Children's Strategic Partnership approved the '[Golden Rules for Participation](#)'. These golden rules have been developed by the Scotland Commissioner for Children and Young People in consultation with children and young people from across Scotland.

There are a number ways in which children, young people and their families can participate in the planning and delivery of services:

[East Lothian Champion's Board](#) was launched in May 2015. It provides a platform for young people with care experience to have their voice heard.

Family Led Information Point (FLIP) is a forum for parents and carers who have a child / relative with additional support needs. FLIP meets once a month and has an [active Facebook page](#).

Viewpoint (Computer Assisted Interviewing Technology) is used to gather the views of looked after children and young people. Results are fed into individual children / young people's plans and reviews, but are also used to inform service providers.

Student Evaluation of Experience Survey is carried out by the Education Service on an annual basis. Primary 6 and Secondary Year 2 pupils are surveyed on a range of subjects including their local community, community safety, participation, child protection and the environment. The findings help to inform service planning.

Pupil Councils are made up of pupil representatives and are in place in all East Lothian secondary schools. Pupil Councils consider aspects of how the school is run. Similar arrangements are in place in primary schools.

The East Lothian Youth Council provides a forum for young people across the county to discuss and campaign on issues affecting them. The Youth Council links with Scottish Youth Parliament national campaigns.

East Lothian young people are also represented in the **Scottish Youth Parliament**. Three young people are elected every two years to represent East Lothian.

Increasing use is being made of **Social Media** as a tool to engage with young people and their families. Facebook and Twitter provide popular forums where young people can access news and information and share their views. Young people can also engage through the **Young Scot website**.

Our [Parental Engagement Strategy](#) covers the range of ways that parents can get involved in their child's education. One way a parent / carer can get involved is to join the **Parent Council** at their child's school. Parent Councils have a key role to play in many school decision making processes. You can find the [contact details for Parent Councils here](#).

Support from the Start (SFTS) provides friendly, free, high quality support and activities to help parents of babies and young children. There are six SFTS groups in East Lothian, each focused on what's needed locally. Parents are actively encouraged to get involved in helping to shape what is provided in each area.

You can contact Support from the Start by emailing supportfromthestart@eastlothian.gov.uk or find your local group on Facebook.



Health & Social Care

The East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership's [Engagement Strategy](#) outlines how it engages with individuals and communities.

One of the ways the Partnership engages is through a number of Strategic Groups. There are currently **6 Strategic Groups**, each of which has an associated Working Group. They include representation from the voluntary sector, service users and carers, and cover the following themes:

- Palliative Care
- Dementia
- Mental Health
- Learning Disabilities
- Physical Disabilities and Sensory Impairment
- Older People's Day provision

The Partnership has also set up **three Local Health and Social Care Forums** (in Dunbar, North Berwick and Musselburgh) to engage local communities on major health and social care developments that affect their immediate areas.

If you would like to find out more, contact elhscp@eastlothian.gov.uk

Planning

Strategic Planning

Local people and communities have the opportunity to be consulted in relation to planning that takes place at a strategic level. A good example of this is the extensive public consultation that has taken place in the preparation of the Local Development Plan. The current Local Development Plan was submitted to Scottish Ministers in spring 2017, but public and stakeholder consultation began as early as spring 2012.

Find out more about the Local Development Plan [here](#). Other strategic planning consultations are advertised in the local press and posted on the [East Lothian Consultation Hub](#).

Planning Applications

Anyone can make comments in relation to planning applications. These can take the form of objections, support or observations about the application. Comments can be made online via [Planning Online](#) or by email or in writing.

You can find out about planning applications underway via Planning Online or through the local press. Or if the planning application is within 20 metres of your property you will receive 'neighbour notification'.

Developers often carry out consultation exercises in relation to developments they are intending to apply for planning permission for (for example, housing developments). These will

usually be held and advertised locally, but it is worth noting that the Council is **not** part of this process.

Libraries & Museums

Museums run by East Lothian Council benefit from the involvement of a number of groups – these include:

- Friends of the John Gray Centre
- Dunbar and District History Society
- Coastal Communities Museum Trust
- Musselburgh Museum and Heritage Group
- Dunbar Town House Working Group
- Prestongrange Railway Society
- Friends of John Muir's Birthplace
- John Muir's Birthplace Charitable Trust
- Good Memories Café

Community groups also have the opportunity to stage their own exhibitions at the John Gray Centre and at Dunbar Town House Museum and Gallery.

In addition, there are opportunities for individuals to participate in the Museum Service as volunteers (in relation to collections, events and activities).

Similarly, libraries in East Lothian benefit from the involvement of volunteers in many of the groups they run, for example, the home library service, Bookbug sessions, homework clubs and Lego clubs.

Parks and Open Spaces

East Lothian Council owns or manages many of the best wildlife locations and popular countryside destinations in the county. Five of these sites are managed through advisory groups which include local representatives. Management Plans for all sites are reviewed every five years, offering an opportunity for public consultation.

A strong network of volunteers help out with a range of tasks related to managing sites, this includes volunteer path wardens, ecological surveyors, livestock checkers, litter pickers and Junior Rangers. Many of East Lothian's public parks benefit from the support of 'Friends of' groups made up of local volunteers and 'In Bloom' groups are also very active in a number of towns.

You can find information about volunteering by visiting the [STRIVE website](#), or on the [Council's own website](#).

Roads

Amendments to Traffic Regulations and new Traffic Regulation Orders are published on the ['Tell Me Scotland'](#) website. Where a consultation is being carried out, details are also published on the [East Lothian Consultation Hub](#).

The Roads Service carries out statutory consultation when required, but also regularly carries out non statutory consultation exercises to inform planning and decision making.

Community Centres

Community Centre Management Committees give local communities an opportunity to be involved in the running and development of their local Community Centre.

Management Committees are often made up of representatives of Community Centre user groups, although individuals with specific skills are also often sought as Committee members. Management Committee members are all volunteers and are supported by Community Development Officers and at times other advisors. Committees tend to meet every 4 to 6 weeks to discuss any issues, plan for the future and monitor the organisation's financial position.

Find out about your local Community Centre and contact details for the relevant Community Development Officer by emailing cldmusselburgh@eastlothian.gov.uk

Community Organisations

East Lothian Council's Community Learning & Development Service supports a wide range of voluntary / third sector organisations in East Lothian. These organisations often provide an opportunity for local people to get involved – some examples include Lamp of Lothian Trust, DadsWork, First Step Community Project, East Lothian Roots & Fruits, West Barns Village Hall and East Lothian Play Association.

You can find out more about local voluntary / third sector organisations you may be interested in by contacting your [local Community Development Officer](#) or by visiting the [STRIVE website](#).

Leisure & Sports

Community Sports Hubs bring together sports clubs and other local partners who want to develop and grow sporting opportunities within their local community. The aim is to ensure community sport is 'locally driven, locally planned, locally owned and widely supported.' There are [Community Sports Hubs in each of the six East Lothian cluster areas](#).

A number of Council sports assets / facilities are leased and managed by community groups including golf clubs, tennis courts, bowling greens, 3G pitches and pavilions.

Getting involved as a volunteer in a local sports club is one way that many people engage in their local community. You can find out more about sport / leisure activities generally and opportunities to volunteer by visiting the [Active East Lothian](#) website.



Community Safety

Community and Police Partnerships (CAPPs) provide an opportunity for members of the public to meet with Police

representatives to identify local community safety related issues. Feedback from CAPPs is used to help inform the deployment of local Police resources and can also guide the deployment of the Council's Community Wardens and Youth Outreach Workers.

Problem Solving Partnerships (PSPs) are a tool used by the Council to help resolve local antisocial behaviour issues. PSPs bring together Police and Council officers, local Councillors and at least one member of the local community.

The Community Empowerment Act

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 is a significant piece of legislation which will further enhance opportunities for the active participation of communities. The Act created new responsibilities and powers for the Council and other public bodies to help empower communities.

The Council is currently working to put in place the provisions of the Act concerning Community Planning, Participation Requests, Asset Transfer Requests, Common Good Property and Allotments. Some of the opportunities for communities are briefly described below, you can find out more by visiting the [Scottish Government website](#).

Participation Requests

The introduction of 'participation requests' by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 provides communities with a new mechanism for having their say in relation to how public services are planned and delivered. Community groups can make a participation request to the Council (as well as to other public service providers) to open a dialogue on issues they feel are important, with a view to improving outcomes.

While there are already a wide range of opportunities for communities and individuals to participate in Council services. Participation requests are a more formal way of doing this and are available to community bodies rather than individuals. If there is something you want to change about Council services, please speak to a service manager first.

You can find out more about Participation Requests [here](#).

Asset Transfer

Under the Community Empowerment Act, communities have the right to make requests to local authorities, Scottish Ministers and a range of other public bodies for the transfer of land or buildings they feel they could make better use of. This can include requesting ownership, leasing or other rights.

More information is available about community asset transfer is available [here](#).

Community Right to Buy

The Community Empowerment Act extends the community right to buy land to cover both urban and rural land and changes some of the procedures previously introduced by the 2003 Land Reform Act. The Act also makes provision for communities to buy land that is abandoned, neglected or detrimental to the environmental wellbeing of the community, where the owner is not willing to sell the land.

More information is available on the [Scottish Government website](#).