Practice Guide: Introduction

people's health trust

? Why?

People's Health Trust created this guide for anyone working within their community to improve the social determinants of health, which are the things that make us healthy. The Practice Guide is for everyone involved in your community project: residents and volunteers as well as staff and managers in your organisation.

It should help you think about what you are doing well, what more you can do and where you might need some support.

What's involved in each section?

Context – the importance of understanding the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities around you and in your neighbourhood.

Approach – the methods you can use to listen to residents, and identify and achieve a local vision.

Involvement – how you can successfully involve and support local people so that they have the power to bring about change.

Governance – ensuring that your project is well run, with accountability, integrity, diversity and transparency in decision making.

Relationships – formal and informal relationships and their importance for the success of your project.

Action – taking action and the different forms of action that may be required to make progress.

Leadership – what makes good leadership, why it is important and how you might build and facilitate it in your community.

Influence – how you make changes happen by influencing decision-makers.

The Practice Guide has eight sections. Each section is stand-alone, there is no priority order, and all sections inter-relate. One way to think about this is:

"A systematic **approach** to understanding your **context** - who lives in your community and the issues they face, and who makes decisions about where you live - helps you identify who to **involve** (especially those who may often be excluded or unheard), what your priorities are, who to **influence**, who to build **relationships** with, and who can support you to take **action**. Good **governance** is essential; helping to create a supportive and accountable framework for building community **leadership** and power."

What makes us healthy?

Community power

Social connections

Jobs and income

Local environment

Local economies

Housing

Education and skills

Digital inclusion

Food security

You can find out more about what makes us healthy by visiting: www.peopleshealthtrust.org.uk/health-inequalities/what-makes-us-healthy

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Communities are made up of people with different interests, identities, and needs. Projects therefore should take a proactive approach to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI). EDI is an integral part of each section of the Practice Guide. Lead organisations and residents involved need to understand and practice equity, diversity and inclusion. This includes taking an active stance opposing the systems and behaviours which cause certain groups harm. It is also important to acknowledge and to understand the additional and intersecting inequities or stigma faced by certain groups of people in your neighborhood, such as people from a minority ethnic community who are also disabled.

Equity is about recognising that we do not all start from the same place, acknowledging imbalances in power and opportunity, and acting on this knowledge to ensure people have the right amount of resources, support and information to have as equal a chance of success as any other person or group.

Diversity is about recognising, respecting and valuing differences in people. The diversity of the local population, for example, should be reflected in governance and decision-making groups.

Inclusion is about ensuring people are valued, involved and able to influence. It involves taking deliberate action to create environments where everyone feels welcome, respected and able to achieve their full potential. While a truly 'inclusive' group is necessarily diverse, a 'diverse' group may not be 'inclusive'.

A succinct way of describing these different concepts is that
"diversity is a number, equity is an outcome, inclusion is a behavior."[1] All three are critical.

1. Barbara Chow (2018) Words to Action: https://learningforfunders.candid.org/content/guides/from-words-to-action/#highlights

Practice Guide: Approach

? Why?

A clear approach will help your project to understand the local context, have a clear way of involving people, identify local issues, plan effectively, stay focused and make sure that what it is doing is relevant and is having a real impact in the community.

It is important to be clear about the path you are taking, why you are taking it and the steps along the way. This helps to ensure that your action stays on track and you achieve your goal.

? What?

Your approach should ensure that you are involving and organising people around a clear local vision and influencing change in your neighbourhood.

Ultimately, this should lead to improvements in the things that make us healthy, better local services, and increased control for residents over their lives.

Think about:
- what can be done locally by people living in the area
- the support they and you might need to do it
- who you will need to influence
- where you could work with others.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Whatever approach you are using, equity, diversity and inclusion should flow through everything you do. As part of this, practitioners and steering group members should regularly consider their own biases and those of the people they are listening to in the neighbourhood. You need to ensure all views are heard and work together to find consensus where viewpoints differ.

Some approaches

You can use a mix of approaches to inform your plans. Two possible options are:

Approach 1
Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

ABCD focuses on identifying the assets (positive qualities), strengths, skills and potential in a community. It is about building relationships so that people can take effective action for a common purpose.

When using ABCD, communities consider:

- What is it that our community can do best, and on their own?
- What does our community require help with?
- What does our community need outside agencies to do for us?

Approach 2
Community Organising

Community organising focuses on building community power and tackling social injustice. It is a process of:

- listening to local residents
- connecting people and motivating them to build their collective power
- developing leaders from within the community
- developing alliances between local community groups
- taking action together to make change

Case study

In the Local Conversation project in Govanhill, Glasgow, where there is a large Roma community, a group of residents knocked on doors and asked their neighbours questions about their aspirations for the area. One of the things that came out of these conversations was the importance of having communal spaces for the Roma community to socialise in. A Community Forum was formed, who successfully lobbied the council to install benches in the local park. People can now get together outdoors and connect.

Reflection

Reflect on the effectiveness of the approaches you are using in your project.

- Do you have a clear, shared idea about what you are trying to achieve in the short, medium and longer term?
- Have you engaged with the wider community about what is planned, consulted them about decisions you have been reached, and how others can contribute?
- Have you identified the diverse communities in your area and taken their views and needs into account?
- Have you thought about who else may be able to help, and with whom you might collaborate?
- Would doing some training help strengthen your approach?

Practice Guide: Context

? Why?

Understanding the context of your neighbourhood – its history, the people who live there, its diversity, what is there and what isn't – is important for your project's success.

Your project will be affected by what has come before as well as what is going on in the community now. Neighbourhoods have histories and characteristics that make them unique. They change as people move in and out, as shops and services open or close, as local and national government policies change; and sometimes global factors affect us, such as Covid-19, the cost of living or food shortages.

Understanding the context you are working in will ensure that your priorities stay relevant, and that you are focusing on the right changes to pursue together. It will also help you to understand the impact you are making.
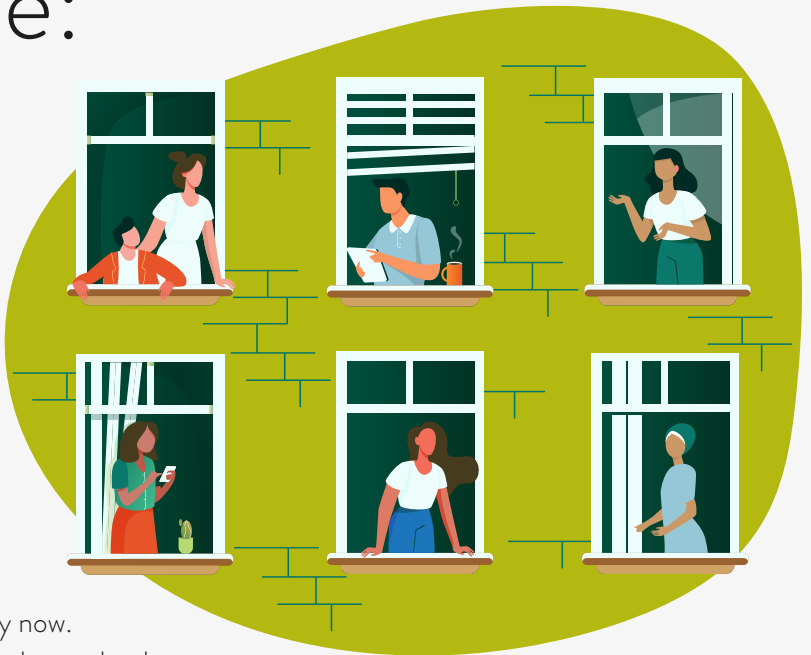
? What?

Understanding the context is about knowing your area. This includes:

- Your neighbourhood's history
- Perceptions about your community, from residents and those outside
- The diversity of the people who live there, for example in terms of ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, or mental health needs
- How well people know their neighbours
- The availability of local jobs and services
- Access to public transport
- The physical environment, for example community meeting spaces, play parks, and tidiness.

Things change over time and so it is a good idea to review what is different, whether that is for better or for worse, and whether residents' priorities have changed. You could organise a walk around, look at maps, scan social media sites, talk to other local organisations and listen to residents. Then you can plan how your project might respond to these changes.

Understanding your context

Map neighbourhood assets, for example community buildings, local services, and neighbourhood groups.

Share residents' memories, stories and identities.

Get to grips with local data / other data sources (For example: mycommunity.org.uk/where-to-find-data-about-your-local-area)

Scan social media to find out what people think about the area.

Listen to diverse perspectives.

? Reflection

- Who lives in the area? Look at council data and census information

- Which issues matter to different communities in your neighbourhood?

- What are the neighbourhood's strengths?

- What has and has not worked well before?

- Who are the local influencers, decision-makers and key organisations, and can you connect with them? For example, councillors, Members of Parliament, doctors, housing providers, or schools.

- What other initiatives are happening in or planned for the local area?

- How have different groups in the areas worked together in the past?

- Does the area have lots of 'assets' such as local buildings, services, public spaces, community groups, or very few?

- How do people communicate? For example, through local newsletters, notice boards, or social media groups. Can you make use of these?

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

As part of understanding context, considering issues of equity, diversity and inclusion will help to shed light on the additional inequalities or stigma faced by certain groups of people in the area who have one or multiple characteristics, for example Black refugees who are disabled, older LGBTQ+ people or young people with learning disabilities.

Knowing the context is also about understanding the power dynamics within neighbourhoods that can impact the ability of certain groups to have their voices heard, so that you can acknowledge it and put measures in place to address this.

Practice Guide: Involvement

? Why?

Community projects cannot succeed without the active involvement of local people. As many people as possible, reflecting the diversity of the community, should be able to meaningfully participate.

The aim is to give everybody a voice and opportunity to work together. Residents know their communities best, what works well and what could be better. They should therefore be involved in shaping decisions about where they live.

? What?

Involvement requires a flexible approach: different ways to reach all of the groups of people who make up the local neighbourhood, and to encourage their participation over time.

People become involved in different ways, at different times, and for different reasons. So, there should be a variety of ways in which people can become and remain involved. David Wilcox (1994)[1] suggests five ways to consider how community members can be involved:

Information *'Here's what we're going to do'*	Consultation *'These are the options, what do you think?'*	Deciding together *'We want to carry out joint decisions together'*	Acting together *'We want to carry out joint decisions together'*	Supporting local initiatives *'We can help you achieve what you want within guidelines'*

All types and levels of involvement are needed for a project to succeed.

The benefits of broadening involvement:

You will be more reflective of the whole community

You will stand to gain wider support

You will have a greater range of interests, skills and talents

More perspectives will inform decision making

New community relationships will be built which can spark new initiatives

Your community will be more active and stronger together

Individuals deeply involved will see a personal positive impact, for example improved self-esteem and stronger social connection and improved health.

Enablers to involvement:

Basic things that can help people to become, and stay, involved:

- **Timing** – it must be convenient for the people you want to involve
- **Place** – people need to feel comfortable about the venue, which must also be accessible
- **Consider caring responsibilities** – whether you need to provide a crèche or carers' costs
- **Relevance** - start with people's personal concerns and wants, and the issues relevant to them
- **Location** – go to where people are rather than expecting them to come to you
- **Structure** - task or theme-based working groups can be more focused and involving. Informal approaches to running meetings and smaller group work can be more engaging, especially for those less confident to speak up in a larger group
- **Honesty** – be realistic about what can be achieved with the time and resources available
- **Be aware of people's participation needs** - you may need an interpreter or a signer, and consider levels of reading and digital literacy
- **Cover participation costs**, such as travel or lunch expenses
- **Have fun!**

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

It is critical that projects take a proactive approach to equity, diversity and inclusion and that you know who lives in your neighbourhood. It is not enough to be open and welcoming, you must also challenge the way in which your project works, whether it is designed to be inclusive and whether it centres the needs of more marginalised people. You must proactively work to involve under-represented groups and those whose voices are seldom heard, helping to increase and champion their voices.

Practice Guide: Action

Why?

Community projects can support residents in neighbourhoods experiencing disadvantage to act on issues that matter to them. Effective action can help bring about the change people want to see in their local community and improve the things that make us healthy - the social determinants of health.

What?

Community action, or social action, is about people coming together to improve their local area. It is often informal and voluntary. People give their time for the good of their community – from volunteering, to challenging decision-making, to improve local services, to creating community-owned services and spaces. Supporting a group of people to take action means involving people in building relationships, priority setting and shaping a plan of action.

Actions are different from day-to-day activities:
- Actions are about community leadership and community power
- Actions seek to bring about change
- Actions are about making a difference to where and how people live.

What helps and what gets in the way of action?

Helps	Overcomes	Stops
Hope	⟶	Fear
Anger	⟶	Apathy
Confidence to make a difference	→	Self-doubt
Working together - solidarity	⟶	Isolation

Some groups of people, especially those most isolated or marginalised, may need more support and resources to be as involved as others.

? Taking action

When taking action, you need:

A good understanding of your neighbourhood – who lives here, who supports you, who you need to influence

Broad community involvement in prioritising issues and defining solutions
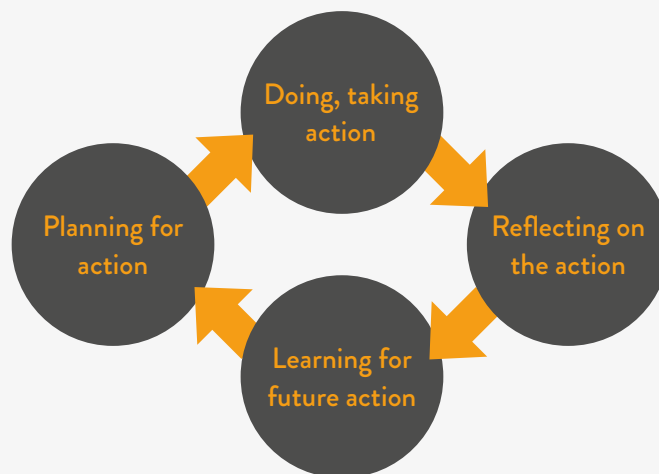
Strong governance processes so that you are accountable to your community

A clear and planned approach.

? Action and learning

People learn best from their own experience. It is important to reflect on action taken and learn from this experience for next time.

> "Residents have firmly adopted an agenda of taking control of [what happens in] their neighbourhood. It has taken time to develop a mechanism of support but local people are starting to feel confident to take action on things that matter to them."
>
> **Local Conversation Manager, Holyhead.**

? Reflection exercise: Learning from action

- Take some time to reflect and learn from the actions that you have taken
- Which actions have been successful, and why?
- Were there any actions that were not successful? Why?
- Think about how you might use this new knowledge and experience in future action.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Making the project an attractive and diverse hub will energise the project and help to mobilise people around its vision and the priorities for the whole of the neighbourhood – engaging people in actions that will lead to longer term change. This includes running activities which appeal to different people in the community, providing a pathway to ambitious and important change through action and influence, ensuring that people speak for themselves and not for others, and presenting a public face which reflects the make-up of the neighbourhood. Some people will need more support and possibly more resources to be as active as others; it is not about treating everyone the same.

Practice Guide: Leadership

? Why?

People's Health Trust believes that local people know their communities best and can come together to make change in their local area. Making this happen is a team effort, so good community leadership is essential.

Good leadership means sharing power and playing to people's strengths. Projects that are well led are more likely to involve more people, to deliver the kinds of things that people want, to bring about real change, and to exist for the long term.

Leaders inspire others and bring out the best in everybody.

? What?

Leadership is about making things happen in an accountable and transparent manner. Community leadership is:

- where people rely on networks and influence rather than formal authority derived from a position of power
- about working with people rather than attracting followers
- the informal and often unrecognised activity that goes on all the time in communities.

Community leaders may be doers or thinkers or both. Community leadership can involve promoting a clear vision, enabling collective decision making, sorting out disputes, through to chairing a meeting, organising litter picks, and encouraging more people to get involved.

Example: Local leaders

June (not her real name) is part of a community group in Ceredigion. She is a single parent whose activism has earned her the trust of residents in the village. She facilitates an online mum's advice group on Facebook which has over 1000 members, helps out at the local school and now runs the local parent and toddler group. As an influential person she helped increase the numbers of mums who attended sessions at the community hub and has assisted with the group's campaign to improve the local park.

? Reflection exercise: Shared leadership

Think about what leadership looks like in your project.

- Who plays key roles in your group?
- Could these roles be more broadly shared out amongst several people
- Can people be supported to develop skills to take on new roles?
- Are there interests and identities that are under-represented in those in leadership roles? How might you go about changing this?

Learning to lead

Community leaders need social and group skills – they listen and make sure all voices are heard; they persuade and they influence; they identify others' strengths, share responsibilities and inspire greater involvement; they collaborate; they are accountable; they get stuff done. Support and training that value peoples lived experience and local knowledge and equip them with the necessary skills, knowledge and space to develop can give people the confidence to take on leadership roles.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Leadership is not about assuming that some people know best, the dominant voices getting what they want, or directing community development based only on majority needs. Community leaders need to promote equity, to welcome different perspectives and to demonstrate fairness. They need to reach out to ensure that the most marginalised voices, such as those of younger people or black and minority ethnic communities, are not only heard but are actively supported to play a part in contributing to the collective leadership of the project.

Practice Guide: Influence

? Why?

Your project is about the community influencing what happens locally.

Improving, shaping or changing the way things are done can mean anything from changing the way neighbourhood services are delivered, changing the opening times of the local shop, influencing the way a housing programme works, campaigning to see more local people employed by nearby businesses, to helping community groups work together better.

? What?

Influence is about the power to change or affect someone or something. Influencing often involves changing someone's mind or getting those who have resources or decision-making power to change how they work.

Forms of influence

Persuading:
Convincing those who have the power to make significant change.

Amplifying:
Making sure the voices of people who are not often listened to are heard.

Campaigning:
Organising or taking direct action around a specific cause or issue.

⬢? Building pressure and influence: Tactics

- ⬢ **Choose your issue** - the key change you want to see and suggest a solution
- ⬢ **Do your research** - there may be information available which will support your case
- ⬢ **Use surveys** to build your case and show how people feel
- ⬢ **Stakeholder mapping** - identify all those who have an interest in what you are doing and who has the power to make the change you want to see
- ⬢ **Write letters** to the people that you are trying to influence with the aim of setting up a meeting
- ⬢ **Organise a petition** - you can do these online as well as in print
- ⬢ **Share personal stories** from someone who has been directly affected by the issue and tell others about the change you want to see through events, posters and online.
- ⬢ **Lobbying and campaigning** – push decision makers to take the action you want to see
- ⬢ **Organising (see Approach section)** - form working groups of people with direct experience of the issue to take action
- ⬢ **Partnerships** - work with other organisations to achieve your goal.

⬢? Reflection exercise:
Influencing change

- ⬢ Share examples of when people have made their voices heard.
  - · what they wanted to change
  - · how they went about it
  - · the ways in which they were successful.

- ⬢ What can you learn from these examples?

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

It is important to really understand the views of people from all groups or you could unintentionally ask for a change which is inaccessible to some people and further marginalise them. In terms of influence, power dynamics within neighbourhoods can restrict certain groups from having their voices heard. Where certain groups are traditionally marginalised and isolated it is important to mitigate power imbalances and enable these residents to voice their views.

Practice Guide: Relationships

Why?

Good working relationships are the key to a successful community-led project. The strength of a community lies in its connections and therefore relationships between residents help to create a collective sense of identity. People tend to feel better when they know their neighbours, for example. People also tend to get involved in a community group or activity because they know someone else who is involved. The more people you have relationships with, the greater the opportunity to involve more people in your project.

For community groups, good relationships with other local groups and decision-makers that hold influence and resources (like the local authority) can help make change.

Reasons to build relationships:

- To create a shared sense of identity and belonging

- To get mutual support

- To collaborate in events or activities where you have a shared interest

- To gain greater understanding of other things happening in your community

- To provide a joint service

- To campaign together

- To influence decisions about your community.

"Being involved has built my confidence. Now I can help others who feel isolated in the community to feel part of it and have a voice"

Caia Park resident, Wrexham

What?

Relationships can be formal or informal. Both sets of relationships are important.

Formal relationships are usually associated with paid workers and organisations, whereas informal but purposeful relationships tend to be built through community action, community groups and networks.

Your project may wish to create a group agreement or ground rules to help respect and nurture relationships. These might include your expectations of each other. Ground rules can help all group members to be confident about holding others to account and to then work better together. Ground rules can also help ensure that your project is inclusive and reflects the different perspectives of all who live in your community.

Reflection exercise:
Building more and better relationships

Take some time to consider:

- Who are the key people you need to have a good relationship with? Map out the different communities in your area along with any voluntary and community groups and public bodies (like the council, schools, or the NHS Trust) so you can see how you can build contacts, trust and involvement as well as break down barriers.

- Then think about what you need from these people, and what they need from you.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

A group's networks can be built to diversify its range of relationships, to avoid being exclusive and based on 'who you know'.

The following checklist (Skinner, S. and Wilson, M. (2002)[1] can help a community group to consider equity, diversity and inclusion in its relationships:

- How does the group promote equity – what is the range of members involved, do they reflect different perspectives?

- Are members supportive of new groups/actions emerging to meet different needs?

- Do all members feel some ownership of the group?

- Do all members contribute to the group's activities?

- Do all members benefit from being part of the group?

- How does the group avoid exclusivity and the development of cliques?

1. Skinner, S. and Wilson, M (2002) Assessing Community Strengths. CDF

Practice Guide: Governance

? Why?

Community projects aim to be well run, open to scrutiny and accountable to other residents as well as funders. Good governance should be reflected in all the structures within the project. This helps to preserve a group's reputation and promotes a positive culture.

? What?

- Governance is about running your organisation well
- It is also relevant to steering group, sub-groups and any groups leading actions and activities within your project
- Effective governance is concerned with structures, processes, meetings, behaviours and how groups work together.

Good governance ensures accountability and transparency, and involves:

Establishing a clear purpose that everyone can understand

Overseeing strategy – vision, priorities and objectives

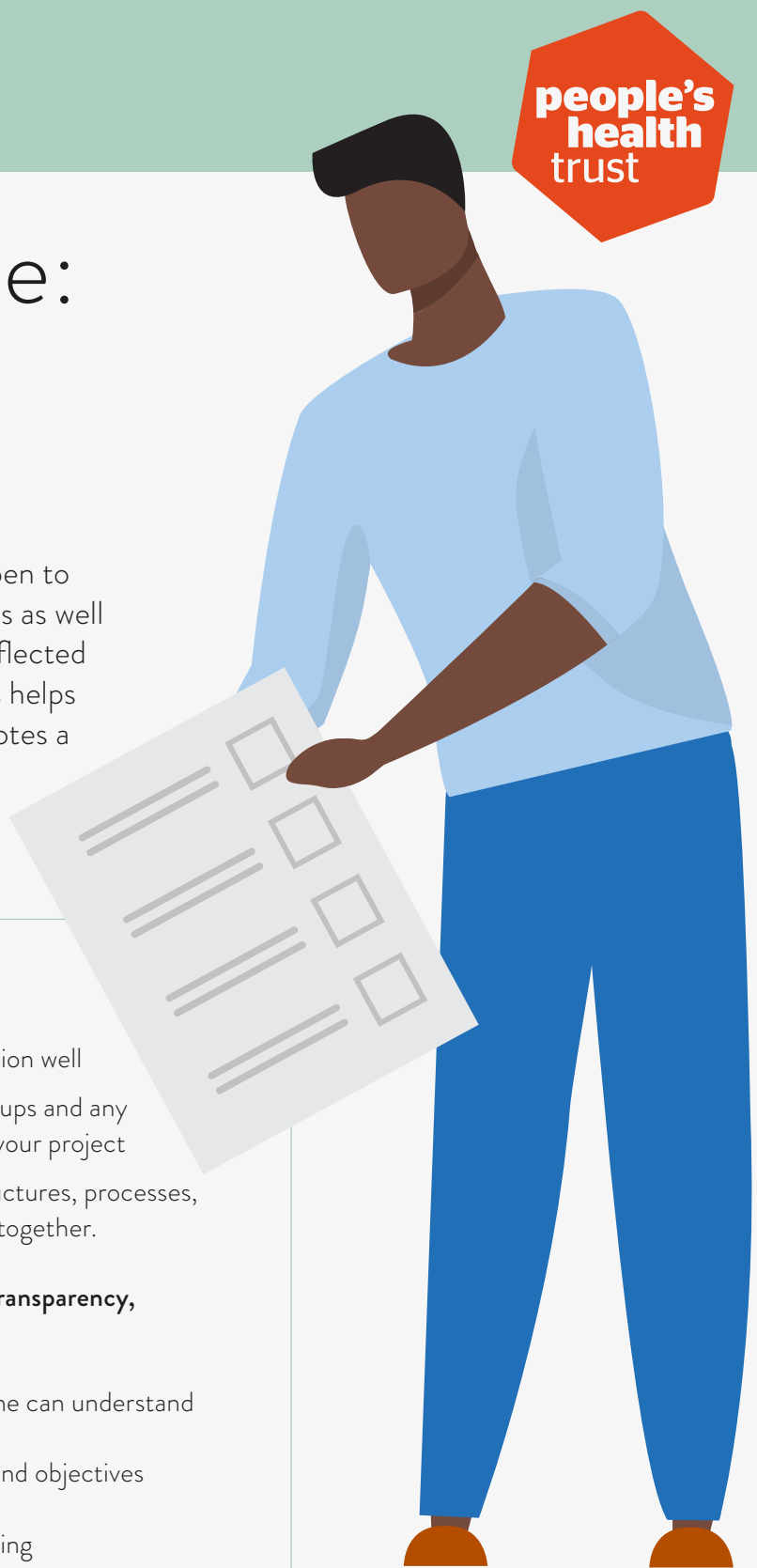Financial management and decision making

Project management and decision making

People management and decision making

Meaningful equity, diversity and inclusion policies and plans

❓ Governance policies and procedures

A governing document is a written agreement that ensures that everyone is aware of each other's responsibilities, shows that your group is democratic and accountable and that there is a clear procedure for decision-making.

A constitution or terms of reference should include:

- The purpose of the group
- The membership and recruitment process, to ensure that group membership is: Transparent, representative, diverse, and inclusive
- How people are elected and how long for
- How often meetings take place and how decisions are made, including who can attend, who can vote, and the minimum number of members that need to be present to make a decision
- If you are distributing funding, such as by awarding community grants, clear and transparent criteria explaining how these are made
- Confidentiality, declarations of interest and how conflicts of interest will be managed
- A 'comments, complaints and serious incidents' procedure
- How you will manage group finances responsibly
- Policies around safeguarding and health and safety.

❓ Reflection exercise:
Conduct and behaviour

Take some time to consider:

- How do you want people to be treated in your group? What types of behaviour are unacceptable?
- How will you ensure that decisions are made fairly and respectfully?
- If someone feels harassed, what should they do about it? Who should they tell? What will the group do about it?
- If someone breaks the code of conduct, what will the group do about it? How will you support and protect the person who feels harassed or bullied?
- How will you make sure that everyone is aware of your code of conduct?

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Lead organisations and volunteers need to build the skills, confidence, tools, and techniques to ensure that they understand and practice equity, diversity and inclusion and this should be embedded in all aspects of your project's governance structures and approach. Organisations should have an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion statement, policy and plan in place. Read People's Health Trust's EDI statement: **www.peopleshealthtrust.org.uk/who-we-are/equality-diversity-and-inclusion**