



## COMMUNITY



## Kirklees Council

### Shaped by People – A new shared outcome

In Kirklees, we're committed to changing our relationships and to becoming an enabler of citizens, not only a provider of services. Five years ago, the Kirklees Democracy Commission asked a wide range of people and organisations what our local democracy should look like for the next generation and beyond. What emerged was a clear desire to grow a stronger local democracy from the ground up, starting with citizens and their sense of local identity and belonging. In 2021, we worked with citizens from all our communities to create a new shared outcome that raises the bar for active citizenship. [Shaped by People](#) describes, in citizens' own words, how things would be if more people felt able to influence what happens in their place.

We've developed our own systemic approach to citizen engagement. It is based on conversations, involves testing out practical ideas and is always focussed on the experiences and insights of citizens and councillors in local places. But we recognised that our ambitions for active citizenship were not reflected in Kirklees' shared outcomes.

To create Shaped by People we held workshops and conversations where citizens listened to each other's stories - stories of neighbourhoods pulling together, people taking the initiative, and simple acts of care and welcome. Then together we asked: how can more people come together to make local places better?

We worked with voluntary sector partners to design activities that would work best for engaging people from diverse groups. A project team of people from partner organisations also guided us throughout. We heard from citizens from every ward in Kirklees, with diverse life experiences, and achieved good representation in terms of age and ethnicity.

Participants shared over 600 ideas and had the chance to rate everyone's responses to help us understand which things struck the truest chord. Shaped by People was woven from those responses in the words citizens chose themselves. This new shared outcome has been adopted by Kirklees Council and our key partners. It is a call to action for everyone and a foundational outcome because everything we do can be shaped by citizens.

Our aim is for every organisation in Kirklees to help create the conditions where active citizens can have more influence over their lives and local places. We're working with people from local organisations to co-design a framework for measuring whether people genuinely feel able to shape their local place. This includes flexible, accessible tools that can be used to have meaningful conversations and to measure our progress.



Four ways in which things are being *Shaped by People* in Kirklees are:

- [OurStoriesOurPlaces.org](https://OurStoriesOurPlaces.org) shares and celebrates people's stories, and we're encouraging colleagues to recognise stories as valuable citizen insight. Local animation studio Fettle has created a video-animated version of Shaped by People in which participants give both their words and their voices to the animation.
- Over 9,000 citizens have participated in conversations about our local places, using the [Place Standard](https://PlaceStandard.org.uk) tool with the results published on [HowGoodIsOurPlace.org.uk](https://HowGoodIsOurPlace.org.uk). Groups of citizens or councillors often lead these engagement activities in a way that reflects distinct local identities. This enables citizens to talk about what matters to them, in the place that matters, instead of responding to someone else's priorities. Citizens share their experiences and aspirations for the future in diverse settings including park benches, pubs, bus stops, cafes, and sports clubs. We've created a Place Standard Investment Fund (initially £500k for 2021), which is supporting and

enabling citizens to bring their ideas to life and connecting citizens with council services so we can respond to the neighbourhood priorities they've identified.

- Our [Democracy Friendly Schools](#) programme, based on recommendations from our **Young Commissioners**, aims to involve all our young citizens. The programme helps young people learn about and feel part of local democracy and civic life, to connect with councillors, and to develop their own projects and activities in order to influence what happens in their local place. Having begun in Autumn 2021, 68% of our high schools have already signed up, all our special schools, and 20% of primary schools. Youth Councillors from our pilot high school have trained their peers and created a new wildlife space, working with other schools, councillors and their community.
- Our ambitious **Place Based Working** programme is changing the culture of our organisation. Recent initiatives include Councillor-led Place Partnerships, developing local solutions based on citizen insight (with £1m invested in mental health support in 2020-21); working differently with partners using our co-created 'Working alongside' shared values; and four Place Hubs creating operational change.

---

**For further information contact:**

Diane Sims

Engagement and Communications Lead – Kirklees Council

[diane.sims@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:diane.sims@kirklees.gov.uk) | 01484 221000 | [www.kirklees.gov.uk](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk)