

Participation Requests Reporting Template 2023/24 for Public Service Authorities

Section 32 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public service authorities to produce an annual report on Participation Request activity and publish this no later than 30 June each year. This template has been created to gather participation request data for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. Information provided will help inform policy and practice at local and national level as the data will be collated and shared by the Scottish Government's Community Empowerment Team. However, it is for each public service authority to make their own annual report publicly available by 30 June each year, whether using this template or not.

Please provide information in the sections below and email the completed template by 30 June 2024 to community.empowerment@gov.scot .

Section One – Public Service Authority Information

Organisation: Scottish Borders Council

Completed by: Clare Malster Role: Participation Officer

Email: cmalster@scotborders.gov.uk Telephone: 01835 826626

Date of completion: 19 June 2024

Are you the Participation Request Lead Contact for the organisation: Yes

If not please provide the name, job title and email address for the lead contact for any queries:

Section 2: Participation Request Data for 2023/24

Please complete following overview table:

Total new applications received in 2023/24	Total applications received prior to 1 April 2022 which were still to be determined at 31 March 2024	Number of accepted applications in 2023/24	Number of applications agreed in 2023/24	Number of applications refused in 2023/24
0	0	0	0	0
<p>Where you were unable to accept a participation request, was an alternative process put in place to discuss the group's issue and work with them or support offered to help them consider how to address their identified need? Please provide details:</p> <p>n/a</p>				

2.1 Please provide details of Participation Requests received using the legislation and outwith the legislation in the reporting year which resulted in changes to public services provided by or on behalf of your public service authority and tell us about those changes. Please also include details of requests received prior to 2023/24, which resulted in changes to the way of working being implemented in 2023/24.

Name of Community Participation Body	Was the Participation Request successful? (Y/N)	Previous way of working	Way of working following changes	What difference did those changes make for the users of the service? Did they improve service user experiences or outcomes?	Details of any participation requests considered outwith the formal process e.g. agreements reached that resulted in changes to services.
Scottish Borders Community Councils' Network (SBCCN) (PR received 2022/23) Request made to the CPP which at that time was a Council committee.	Y	Previous to the PR community input to the CPP was provided by the Third Sector Interface	SBCCN is now a member of the CPP Strategic Board	The outcome was to give the community perspective and knowledge as a member of the Board at the highest level. As the Outcome Improvement Process is ongoing the CPP is undertaking a review as we approach two years of this request being agreed.	
Scottish Borders Self Directed Support Forum (PR received 2019/20 – Outcome Improvement Process delayed due to the pandemic).	Y	It was proposed to introduce direct payment pre-paid cards for Self Directed Support (SDS) payments	The SDS Forum took part in full options appraisal	Direct payment pre-paid cards were introduced as one option that people can choose to receive their SDS payments. The Forum was also involved in conversations prior to the implementation of the cards.	
Grass cutting to improve amenity of local area – multi bodies	Not formal request	Local authority responsible for all grass cutting	Communities can take on cutting/strimming of paths and grassed areas.	See section 2.2	

Jedburgh Leisure Facilities Trust	Not formal request	Local authority did not reopen this set of toilets following the pandemic	Community responsible for all aspects of managing/operating the public toilets	See 2.2	
Jedburgh children & teenagers – through Jedburgh Grammar Campus	Not formal request			See 2.2	

2.2 Please use this space to provide any further comments relating to the above data, such as:

- **describing the outcome improvement process (whether or not it resulted from a formal participation request)**
- **how the community participation body was involved in designing the outcome improvement process**
- **how the community participation body participated in the outcome improvement process including taking part in decisions and delivering actions**
- **details of any wider benefits, such as improved community engagement and ongoing participation.**

Grass cutting has previously been the subject of a formal participation request although last year saw groups in 22 towns and villages (mainly through community councils) cut and trim grassed areas and pathways to improve the amenity in their areas through informal approaches to Scottish Borders Councils. Building on community ambitions in relation to this we commenced working with communities to identify grass cutting management models with the aim of improving outcomes for communities. This work will continue in to 2023/24 when we hope that the number of communities wishing to work with us will increase.

During 2023/24 we continued to work with Jedburgh Leisure Facilities Trust who reopened, and have been operating, a set of public toilets in the town, which had been closed by the local authority during the pandemic. Jedburgh is the first town in Scotland for people travelling north on the A68. Over the past 12 months the Trust reports that more people have been stopping to use the facilities and spend time in the town centre. This has included use by organised coach tours who now stop here rather than on the outskirts of the town. The Trust is in the process of buying the toilets (outwith the formal asset transfer process).

During 2023/24 children and young people at Jedburgh Grammar Campus created a Neighbourhood Plan setting out their priorities for improving outcomes in the town. The resulting plan includes nine priority outcome areas, the local authority has been identified as a key stakeholder in seven of these areas and will be engaging with the children & young people going forward. The outcomes are:

1. More facilities and opportunities for older children (aged 10+) and young people,
2. Enhancing Youth Voice across decision-making in the Council area,
3. Treating each other and our environment well,
4. Increase local amenities, services and the economy,
5. Manage resources efficiently and sustainable energy generation,

6. Improve local housing options, and
7. Improving transport opportunities and movement.

Going forward the Town Team will continue to engage with the school on key aspects of the plan which the children and young people have identified to ensure a whole town approach to improving outcomes for all.

In addition to the information provided in section 2.1: Place Making is currently underway in 60 communities across the Borders. Through this work Town Teams are identifying opportunities to work with the local authority, and other partners, in order to improve outcomes for their communities. This work is also generating increased interest in asset transfer as communities explore how community ownership can be a way to improve outcomes.

Section Three – Partnership Working & Promotion of Participation Requests

3.1a Please provide details of any engagement with support organisations such as local Third Sector Interfaces and public sector Community Learning and Development staff or national organisations such as the Scottish Community Development Centre.

For example has any new practices to support Participation Requests been developed from working with other bodies, or any learning gained?

Scottish Borders Council works closely with the local TSI to support communities to participate in activities that improve outcomes for people in their area. Our Community Learning and Development officers are very much engaged with people in their localities to improve outcomes for either small distinct groups or the wider community. As part of this work, they support groups who are experiencing inequality of outcome in order to reduce those inequalities and make the Borders a more equitable place to live.

Volunteers provide an important role in the Borders. During 2023/24 over 250 volunteers worked 2,515* hours to improve the health and opportunities for social interaction as part of the Walk It project.

*.Figures not available for Q4

3.1b Please tell us about any challenges you have had in accessing support.

We haven't experienced any challenges accessing support and strive to ensure that our communities don't either.

3.2 Please provide details of action taken to promote the use of Participation Requests or support Community Participation Bodies in making a Participation Request.

For example this could include: Support before making a request, such as to determine whether a participation request is the most appropriate route; Support to make the request such as assist groups to complete forms, or identify appropriate outcomes; and/or Support to take part effectively in outcome improvement processes (whether or not they resulted from a formal participation request).

We continue to promote participation requests through our Area Partnership meetings (community based based meetings taking place across our five localities) and have enhanced information on our website (which we continue to review).

Support for communities progressing participation requests, whether formal or not, is provided by staff across the organisation including our locality-based community engagement officers and CLD staff,

3.3 Please let us know what actions you have been taking to ensure that your processes are inclusive.

For example, this could include accessible information and other support, which enable wider use of participation requests by all population groups including those with protected characteristics. We are particularly interested in any ways you have targeted those with protected characteristics to raise awareness of the PR process or support request submissions.

We have not targeted equality groups specifically about participation requests. However, we take steps to engage with the third sector and community bodies who represent those with protected characteristics. By doing so we maintain good working relationships and are able to work with these groups to ensure that those who want to be involved have the opportunity to do so without over burdening people with interactions, that may be unwanted and result to something similar to consultation fatigue.

3.4 Please outline any plans you have to continue involving local people and local groups in outcome improvement processes as a result of your Participation Request policies (and also outwith formal participation requests).

Central to all our work is the organisation's aim to put communities at the heart of everything we do. We are developing a new operating model, the #SBCWay, which will be our main way of working and ensure that we, as an organisation, evolve in order to fulfil our responsibilities and deliver the highest possible quality of services to our community. Our new, recently agreed, Community Engagement Strategy sets out our commitment to working with communities and will support staff to engage with everyone who wishes to engage with us, at any level (e.g., informed, consulted, involved etc). This approach is central to all our work, not just participation requests.

3.5 Please provide details about any work undertaken to consider wider reviews of participation practice, and any such methods used to engage with communities.

As mentioned in 3.4 about, we have recently agreed a new community engagement strategy. To make sure that this remains current we are putting in place an ongoing review process and are committed to reviewing the strategy six months following publication. We will be developing a tool kit to accompany the Strategy, which will also be updated on a regular basis, and will be available to all who are living and /or working in the Scottish Borders.

Section Four – Additional Information

4.1 Please use this space to provide any further feedback not covered in the above sections.

For example, we are interested in your reflections about what has gone well and what has gone less well in relation to Participation Requests over the past year?

Is there any aspect of the process that you intend to adapt or change in the year ahead?

Have you identified any needs for guidance or support that would support the process?

If you have developed any case study material or published new information about Participation Requests please share links to those with us here.

We are being told more and more by our communities that too much is being asked of them. In a small area like the Borders (pop. 116,020) we see the same faces round many tables. We have 69 community council areas in the Borders. We currently have three CCs in abeyance because they cannot

recruit volunteers – two of these are for more than two years. As we move forward, and public sector budgets become tighter, we must ensure that we value our community volunteers and ensure that they are supported to become involved in activity which they choose and do not feel pressured to do so.

Any other information:

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If you have any queries please contact Malcolm Cowie, Participation Request Policy Manager at Malcolm.cowie@gov.scot
Community Empowerment Team, Scottish Government