



Local democracy in Kirklees, February 2021

Growing a stronger local democracy

Our work in local places responds directly to the learning and recommendations from the Kirklees Democracy Commission's [Growing a stronger local democracy, from the ground up](#) report. Local identity is clearly an important issue for our citizens. People told us that they would like more of an ongoing conversation about what happens in our places, rather than stop-start consultations. Our work is enabling and encouraging people of all ages to become active citizens, and to shape our local places based on what matters to them. Engaging councillors, citizens and partners in this work is really important for strengthening our local democracy.

[Democracy in Kirklees](#)

Place Based Working

We're developing new ways of working with and alongside citizens and organisations in our local places. This is a key strategic commitment to change the culture of our council, with a focus on relationships and distinct local places, so that we become an enabler of citizens, rather than a provider of services. It's a significant outcome of the Democracy Commission's work.

How Good Is Our Place?

We're using the Place Standard tool to have conversations about local places in Kirklees (from small neighbourhoods to Huddersfield Town Centre). We're working with citizens, councillors and partners to find out what matters to people in their place, with most of the activities being community led. This is creating and strengthening relationships, helping citizens to take an active role in developing our local places. Some projects have reached the action stage, with citizens directly influencing what the council does (based on what we learned), and with local groups and organisations developing their own solutions.

[How Good Is Our Place?](#)

New Citizenship Project

In 2019 we worked with our citizens and the New Citizenship Project in the Fieldhead neighbourhood of Birstall and the Ashbrow ward of Huddersfield. We've been exploring how we can best work together to make our local places even better. Work so far has been shared with our leadership and has informed our wider work with citizens in local places. Now we're having conversations with citizens across Kirklees, gathering citizen stories and working with partners to develop a way of measuring Citizen Confidence – so that whether citizens feel able to change their local place will become a key strategic outcome for Kirklees Council.

[What we're learning from the citizens of Ashbrow and Fieldhead](#)
[How can more people come together to make local places better?](#)

Mutual aid and local democracy

We've been working closely with mutual aid groups and community anchor organisations since March 2020. This has included deep listening and acting on citizen insight, developing a local network and a big shift in our relationships with voluntary sector partners.

[We are with you: Community Response in Kirklees](#)

We are working alongside

We've recently worked with partners to revisit our Voluntary Sector Strategy and have created a statement of shared principles and values, to act as a litmus test for how open and participatory we really are. We'll be using this to help change our working culture.

Growing Great Places – civic crowdfunding

We're working with Spacehive to help citizens and local organisations run successful crowdfunding campaign to generate support for projects in our local places. It's all about backing the things that matter to our citizens. We hope to link this scheme with our Place Standard work, so that some of the ideas our citizens create during their engagement activities can be developed further through civic crowdfunding.

[Growing Great Places](#)

Putting councillors at the heart

After learning that the role of councillor was not well understood by our staff or citizens, we've put much more focus on this, including redesigning our support for councillors, storytelling, staff training and creating more opportunities for people to connect with councillors.

Democracy Friendly Schools

We're strongly aware of the responsibility that we have to our young citizens. In 2019 we shared our [Growing a stronger youth council](#) report, based on learning from over 1,700 of our young citizens and others who our Young Commissioners gathered evidence from (following the Democracy Commission's principles and approach). This has led to the development of our [Democracy Friendly Schools](#) programme. Key aspects of this are helping young people to feel part of local democracy and civic life, to connect with councillors and to develop their own projects and activities to have influence over what happens in their local place. This work will also create learning resources that will benefit citizens of all ages.

Democracy Pioneers

In 2020 we were recognised as one of Nesta's Democracy Pioneers for our programme of work with young citizens. We also shared our wider experiences of strengthening local democracy, worked on collaborative missions with other pioneers and helped to develop future scenarios for everyday democracy.

[Nesta Democracy Pioneers – Democracy Friendly Schools](#)

[The future of everyday democracy](#)