

Big Lottery Fund

Motivations for Public Involvement

Research Report

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Executive Summary

Any organisation seeking to involve the public in decision-making faces a fundamental challenge. Across a raft of issues, from voting to the provision of public services, the public's demand to be involved consistently outstrips the supply of public time, energy and motivation actually to get involved.

An effective public involvement strategy needs to involve people as they actually are – not people as they say they ought to be. SHM was therefore commissioned by the Big Lottery Fund to conduct a qualitative research programme which aimed to:

- Provide a more sophisticated understanding of what really motivates people to become involved.
- Understand how, when and where people wish to be involved.
- Identify barriers to involvement and factors that lead to public disengagement.

The main phase of research involved a diverse sample of 72 participants from across all four nations of the UK, through a mixture of workshops and depth interviews. An initial phase of pre-research involved a further 45 participants in street-depth interviews, and was important in the design of the main phase of research.

The research suggested a simple three-step model of involvement:

- People need to **know** there is an opportunity to get involved
- People need to **care** about that opportunity
- People need to **act** on the opportunity

People need to know

Our research confirmed that effective publicity and information is the bedrock of any public involvement strategy. Participants identified awareness of the Big Lottery Fund, of the impact its

funding had on the things they cared about, and of the potential impact of their views on that funding as the essential first step towards greater involvement. For some, just being more aware translates into feeling ‘more involved’.

People need to care

Across a range of very diverse participants, the research suggested a simple pattern in people’s basic motivations to get involved. The things people care about are closely tied up with their identities: how they see themselves and want to be seen by others. Who I am is partly defined by what I care about – the people I feel a responsibility to or for, the community or groups I feel part of, the places I identify with and the things I feel connected with.

There are two basic types of motivation for getting involved:

- External: **threats** to any of these people/things that I care about.
- Internal: **needs** of or **requests** from any of these people/things that I care about.

This raises an immediate challenge for getting people involved in *decision-making*. When asked, people naturally talk about getting involved in doing things, not in making decisions. In line with the simple framework above, there are three main ways in which people may currently care about decision-making:

- Resisting: when bad decisions threaten people/things they care about.
- Complaining: when they see decisions as a ‘waste’ in contrast to the needs/requests of the people/things they care about.
- Bidding: when they seek to get decision-makers to address the needs/requests of the things they care about.

By contrast, there is little motivation currently to get involved in the *process* of making decisions. This process requires objectivity, whereas motivations to get involved are intensely subjective and closely linked to individual identities. Indeed, the process of acting as an objective arbiter is very unappealing to some people, as choosing one project means putting another one down.

People need to act

Sometimes people care so much that their emotion alone prompts action. More often, however, the step from caring to acting is governed by three further ‘filters’:

- **Am I likely to make a difference?**

People make judgements about the extent to which getting involved is actually likely to bring about any kind of change. In part, this is about their level of belief (or more often cynicism) about the sincerity of chances to ‘have a say’. However, it is also about whether individuals see themselves as the *sort of people* that have influence. Issues such as social class, for instance, are very significant here.

- **What else could I be doing with my time/energy here and now?**

Any organisation trying to get people involved needs to recognise that, for most of the population, involvement has to compete with the many other things people could be doing at the same time. Competing alternatives may offer better outcomes (e.g. a solution to a more urgent need, or a greater impact on the people/things a person cares about, or greater personal benefits) or a better process (e.g. one that is more enjoyable or appropriate to the time and place). Because getting involved needs to compete with alternatives, time and place are critical. For instance, a number of participants in this research felt they would be more likely to get involved if they could do so through **work-based schemes**, possibly sponsored as part of organisations CSR commitments. A break from work is intrinsically much more appealing; and many (though not all) people felt that the process of decision-making fitted better with the kind of identity they needed to adopt at work (typically more public and objective) than with their personal time.

- **What are other people doing?**

For many people, getting involved is about getting involved with *other people*. The fact that others are already involved can have a significant positive impact on the perceived likelihood of making a difference and on how pleasant the process is. ‘Joining in’ is also a motivator in its own right, with positive implications for how a person sees themselves. It is far easier and more appealing for most people to ‘join in’ than to ‘break ranks’ and be the first mover.

One interesting by-product of the way these three ‘filters’ on action operate is that getting involved can make people more (or less) likely to *stay* involved. This is because getting involved can change how people see themselves and want to be seen; alter their views of whether they are likely to make a difference; and transform their expectations of what the process will be like. Moreover, as a result of the ‘joining in’ effect, each person that gets involved contributes to the chances that others will get involved. We saw evidence of these effects even in short workshops, where people reported changes in their perspectives at the end of a moderated two-hour discussion. A strategy for public involvement needs to take these effects into consideration, and consider both how to *hook* people initially and how to *sustain* their involvement.

Implications

The understanding of motivations to get involved presented above suggests six basic principles for a public involvement strategy.

1. **Make getting involved something that matters**

The idea of getting involved in decision-making is at best detached from people’s motivations, at worst unappealing

2. **Convince people they count**

Not only do people lack faith in ‘the authorities’; they also lack faith in themselves as individuals whose views can and ought to carry weight

3. **Ensure getting involved competes against the alternatives**

People will not get involved if the experience and outcomes compare poorly to other activities available at the same time and place

4. **Make getting involved about joining in**

Involvement activities that seek to engage people only as individuals may miss out on one of the key drivers of action

5. **Consider ways to jump-start involvement**

Until people get involved, they may not be motivated to get involved; and until a few people lead the way, others may not follow

6. **Get the message out**

Unless people know how what BIG does impacts on the things they care about, the foundation of public involvement will be missing

1. Introduction

The potential benefits of greater public involvement to an organisation such as the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) are well-known: more effective and responsive decision-making and organisational processes can yield to better use of funds; increased awareness of how Lottery money is spent and of the benefits it brings can help to ‘reconnect’ the public with the Lottery; enhanced public support for and awareness of funded projects can translate into a greater chance of success for those projects; and so forth.

In recent years, BIG has been at the forefront of piloting innovative approaches to public involvement – such as the high-profile People’s Millions programme, locally focussed point of sale trials (‘Your Pound, Your Choice’) in Leicester and Plymouth, or the recruitment of young people onto national and regional decision-making committees for the Young People’s Fund. These pilots and programmes have provided BIG an evidence base for future public involvement activity: but they have also confirmed a **fundamental challenge** faced by any organisation seeking to involve the public in decision-making:

Across a raft of issues, from voting to the provision of public services, **the public’s demand to be involved consistently outstrips the supply of public time, energy and motivation actually to get involved.** There is a disparity between attitude and behaviour: between what people say about their wish to be involved and their actual level of engagement when given the opportunity.

It was this challenge which SHM was commissioned to investigate through a programme of qualitative research with members of the public across the UK. The starting point for this research was the recognition that making public involvement possible is not the same as making it happen. If people are not **motivated** to take them up, opportunities to get involved mean little or nothing. Indeed inappropriate or poorly executed public involvement mechanisms can actually *reduce* people’s willingness and enthusiasm to get involved. Making public involvement possible can, in the worst cases, mean making it *less* likely to happen.

Effective public involvement mechanisms therefore need to involve people as they actually are – not people as they *say* they are. Attitude research based on what people say about what they want has an

important role to play, but it often fails to unlock the deeper motivations into which a successful public involvement strategy needs to tap. It was these deeper motivations that SHM's research was design to unlock. More specifically, we set out to:

- Provide a more sophisticated understanding of what really motivates people to become involved
- Understand how, when and where people wish to be involved
- Identify barriers to involvement and factors that lead to public disengagement

2. Methodology

2.1 Research philosophy

For people to get involved in decision-making, they need to have a real opportunity to do so; they need to be aware that that opportunity exists; and they need to be motivated to take it up. A common mistake is to underestimate the importance of the third of these ingredients in the design of approaches to public involvement. Because people generally *say* they want to be more involved in decision-making, motivation is assumed to be a commodity in relatively plentiful supply. Publicity (awareness building) and marketing (motivation building) are seen, all too frequently, to be activities which can be undertaken *after* the design of an involvement mechanism. This often creates a difficult if not impossible task: namely, to correct the shortcomings of an involvement mechanism which is poorly matched to the realities of people's lives.

Far more effective is to ensure that the design of effective involvement mechanisms is *driven by* a proper understanding of issues around motivation and awareness. This same reversal of flow – starting with real people, rather than with invented mechanisms – underpins the participatory design techniques which SHM employed in this research. Many other qualitative research methods are essentially *evaluative*, in that they involve presenting to participants options which have been created in advance, and asking them to comment. These methods have an important role to play – for instance in testing relatively developed ideas prior to pilot or roll-out. They are less effective, however, in uncovering the motivations and experiences of participants. Participatory design, unlike these other research methods, is generative: its essence is to give participants the tools to develop their own ideas and options, ideally in response to problems that they have also had a hand in defining. Participatory design techniques deliver deep insights into the motivations and experiences of participants; innovative ideas developed by the people on whom those innovations need to have an impact; and positive outcomes for the participants themselves.

A critical element of the design of this research programme was the inclusion of a pre-research phase, based on street-depth interviews, which was used to inform the design of the process for the main phase of research. This pre-research phase is described briefly in Section 2.2 below. The process for the main phase of research is described in Section 2.3.

2.2 Pre-research

The pre-research phase consisted of ‘street-depth’ interviews in three locations with a total of 45 individuals. The aim of these interviews was to explore how the ‘problem’ of public involvement might look from the perspective of members of the public themselves, and how it might be brought to life in a way that would engage participants in the main phase of research.

One of the most important findings from this pre-research phase was just how hard it was to engage people in any kind of meaningful discussion on the topic of ‘involvement in decision-making’. This very much confirmed our expectations, based on what was known already about public involvement (including evidence from BIG’s own trials and programmes). The pre-research phase effectively served as an opportunity to pilot different ways of overcoming this difficulty and asking people about ‘involvement in decision-making’. Without exception, however, the approaches trialled ran up against the same patterns of disengagement in all but a very few people. These ‘disengaged responses’, we recognised, would be challenges not only for public involvement but also for our own *research* into public involvement.

In all, we identified six recurring patterns of ‘disengaged response’– rationalisations or excuses for not getting involved – during the pre-research phase. These were as follows:

- “I haven’t got time to get involved”
- “I don’t know what I’d need to do to have a say”
- “My view won’t make any difference anyway”
- “I’m not sure they want to hear from people like me”
- “I trust the people making the decisions to make a good decision”
- “I’m really not that bothered how the money gets spent”

2.3 Main research

On the basis of the pre-research phase, we were able to identify that the critical methodological challenge for the main phase of research was how to move participants beyond the patterns of ‘disengaged response’. To do this, we recognised, we needed to:

- objectify these ‘disengaged responses’ (as characters) so that participants could look at them ‘from the outside’
- find a way to make participants care about tackling these ‘disengaged responses’ – i.e. to find a way of making BIG’s challenge (to build public involvement) meaningful to participants

To achieve these ends, we identified the following basic steps:

- Ask participants to imagine they are serving on a ‘committee’ which will make decisions about how to spend a pot of Lottery money assigned to their local area, and to develop a vision (rather than a specific programme) for how this money should be spent. This step enables participants to build a scenario that they actually care about.
- Explain that the pot of money will only be released if the ‘committee’ can show that it has actively and meaningfully involved lots of other people in developing the vision for how the money will be spent. This step links the problem of tackling disengagement to the scenario that participants care about.
- Present characters that the committee needs to involve, which are based on the patterns of response identified in the pre-research phase. This step enables participants, from the perspective of people who now care about public involvement, to objectify typical patterns of response that they themselves may usually adopt. Participant responses to this exercise illustrate this objectification:

I have used all of these excuses: I can't be bothered, I haven't got the time, I trust you to spend the money for me, etc. You know.

Sometimes I think when they say that it's a cop-out.

- Work with participants to develop ways of involving these participants. This step engages participants in really exploring positive motivations to get involved, as opposed to the rationalisations and excuses which are used to account for not getting involved.

This basic process was used in the design of a two-hour workshop, to be run with groups of 8-10 participants. To ensure coverage of those who might not easily be able to participate in a workshop (e.g. people living in very remote areas, people with care responsibilities or anti-social working patterns, people with health issues), a telephone interview process was also designed. The total sample covered by these two approaches was 72.

3. Findings

As discussed in Section 2, a basic assumption of this research was that, for people to get involved in decision-making, they need to have a real opportunity to do so, they need to be aware that that opportunity exists, and they need to be motivated to take it up. However, analysis of findings from the workshops and interviews (along with the pre-research phase) suggested an important refinement of this model, which is to distinguish within ‘motivation’ between the state of caring about something and the actual act of getting involved. (As an analogy, consider the distinction between the state of being combustible, and a fire actually starting.) The significance of this distinction will become apparent in the discussions that follow.

With this refinement, we propose a simple three-step model of the conditions of public involvement (assuming an opportunity to get involved exists):

- People need to **know** there is an opportunity to get involved
- People need to **care** about that opportunity
- People need to **act** on the opportunity

The sections that follow explore each of these three conditions in more detail.

3.1 People need to know

Unsurprisingly, participants identified the need to know *how* to get involved as an essential condition of involvement.

How do you get involved? Does anybody here know? So in many ways what we're discussing here is immaterial, because even if we have objections, we don't know how to do it, so there's no point in putting the objections up if you don't know how to go about it.

In selecting the right channels to deliver this information, participants emphasised the circumstances, needs and preferences of the recipient of the information.

This lady does not have time, she's a professional, she works 60 hours a week or she hasn't got time because she's got three kids that she's got to get to school and a part time job. So you could take the information to the school or to her office so when she walks through the door to drop her kids off at school, it says this is what's happening.... Then I think with this lady, she doesn't know what she has to do, you go into her workplace and you go into the school, you go into the supermarket or to the shop and she might have gone to Dorothy Perkins and seen it as she was queuing up because that's what she does.

I'm not saying he's religious or anything like that, but that becomes another avenue, take it possibly into church, take it into religious places. It gives you another outlet.

They always have things up on billboards and stuff, and I go up and look at that.

Getting to people through the internet, because there's so many immigrants and that who don't even speak English, one internet page in different languages.

A little more surprisingly, participants tended **not** to identify the mechanisms of the Lottery itself as an important channel for information – and on the few occasions where they did, they tended to see these as opportunities for people to register interest, rather than serious channels for the delivery of information.

You could mark your ticket if you want information sent to you.

...we thought when you're putting advertising on television for the Lottery, why not just put up: somebody who wants to have a say can ring up a telephone line to have a say.

As well as discussing how information should be delivered (channels), participants also reflected on what kind of points would need to be made (content). The points to be made here largely prefigure

the themes that will be elaborated in the next two sections: information about opportunities to get involved needs to get people to care about these opportunities and prompt them to act. The need to link Lottery funding to very concrete projects and outcomes which matter to individuals was a recurring point:

They could advertise in the local paper saying: this has been spent in your area.

[Discussing how to engage a character card] The thing that we all said we would like, we'd like to know what they do for a living, what their status was, was this lady married with two children? You can take the conversation in different paths [depending on the individual's interests]

... when you do a poster that says National Lottery funding available, you think: oh, I've seen that in the newspaper. So you actually make the effort to go because you've seen they've given X amount of money to a basketball team or something.

You may have obscure ideas about what the Lottery funding is spent on, but you see – oh, gosh, yes, so-and-so somewhere else have this and it's a really good idea, I would never have thought the Lottery Fund could be used for that.

A number of participants talked about this kind of information as being important not just to promote specific opportunities to get involved, but to create what might be called a **context of involvement**. Indeed, participants' responses suggest that keeping people informed on a regular basis about how decisions are being made and how money is being spent is in itself a positive way of involving at least some people, and over time (albeit slowly) building a more personal connection with Lottery funding. The mere fact of being more aware of what is going on can translate into feeling more involved.

It's a bit like council tax. You know exactly how much money you're paying and you can see what the council tax has been spent on, whether it's lighting, police or whatever [...] If you're seeing a breakdown of how this money is spent, you're living with that every three months or every six months and you're seeing: oh, it does get spent and, hang on a minute, why is it getting spent on that, or I'm really glad that it was spent on that and all of a sudden it does matter to you because it's in your life all the time. It's not something that happens once every ten years [...] It becomes familiar to you so you're not afraid of it and you're not afraid of speaking about it or speaking out to get what you want.

...make each stage go public so they know more what's going on. So it just seems more on a personal level with them, [not in a] stuffy office somewhere that they've got no idea what's going on. [...] So people would know what's going on, rather than: here is an idea, and then two years later something being there, and not really knowing what happened in between.

I think it could have a two pronged result by feeding people information as to the sorts of projects that are helped with the Lottery and the good that comes out of the projects done. And one aspect would be to help people make a decision if they want to get involved or not, and give them a procedure to go to actually get

involved. But the other aspect I think as well is [...] there would be a whole lot of people who would be back to buying the Lottery tickets, if they saw practical examples of where their money was going to.

Information about the way in which public involvement had had an impact on funding decisions was also identified by a number of participants as important in building this context of involvement – and especially in overcoming people’s preconceptions about the sort of person that can get involved.

Send them the information and statistics of what’s going on. This man says ‘I’m not sure they want to hear from people like me’. If you tell him that that’s teenagers [...], old people, single mums and that, [so] they think it’s loads of people that adds up to [a decision] at the end of the day.

...through universities, schools, further education, we need to teach people early on that they can have a say. It doesn’t have to be old people on all these committees.

“It could be you” [that makes the decision], you could use that. [...] That gives people the idea that you’re part of the Lottery and you can still have a say.

Participants were clear about the need to ensure that the public are properly informed not just about how they can get involved in decision-making, but also about the wider context of that decision-making. They were also realistic about the challenges in this area, however. In particular, they acknowledged that mere awareness does not imply action.

We all get letters to go to these meetings to put our points of view, but we don’t go and at the end of the day they take their points of view. We’ve got no argument to that because we’re not there. If we want that argument, we’ve got to go. We’re just too lazy to go.

Do you not think we’re becoming a very lazy and technically-minded society. I feel we’re just not interested enough in a subject to take part, or we would be doing a lot more for our community.

For people to get involved, they must also care about the opportunity and act on it. These are the subjects of Sections 3.2 and 3.3.

3.2 People need to care

It may seem an obvious point, but it is one worth repeating for reasons that we shall return to later in this section: to motivate people to get involved, we have to tap into whatever it is that they **care** about.

Surely the essence is caring. If you care enough about something, you're going to get involved, whether it's something directly affecting you or something that is broader.

If you're doing a certain area and taking people from a certain area, you could do your research to find out what the contentious issues are in that area anyway. It will be a red rag to a bull to some people. They might be pretty passive until you say: well, what do you think about that building we built there?

What sorts of things did participants identify that they cared about? Unsurprisingly, one's own interests and the interests of those nearest to one featured strongly.

I've never been involved because I don't think anything's affected me directly like that.

If it's an issue that's affecting me directly, or I'm quite affected by. [...] Directly to myself. I won't just sign anything. I'm quite particular about what I'm interested in, what I stand for.

I was doing some voluntary work at my little boy's school just to see what commitment level and what key skills they have to have and what I could do as a parent to help him progress through school...

I think people, particularly if they've had a tragedy or something within their lives that affects everything they do daily, children with illnesses or things like that, get very actively involved in supporting organisations like that, but I think it's not that you go out and look for an organisation to do, you have to because somebody you know has been affected.

For some, this concern for others' interests extended to wider groups with whom participants identified personally.

So, things like that really affect me. [The] racism that happened in Big Brother recently, that affected me.

For many, however, caring extended to groups of people who were seen to have some kind of call on one precisely as a result of being *different* – 'legitimately needy' groups such as the old and the young.

But it's really, really sad, when you see things like that. [...] My mum works with old people, and you see some of these old people, the only person that they see in the week is my mum.

I think to give people better lives, you know, people who are very poor and that, and young people, to give them better lives.

Mainly I think anything to do with children, I would be very much involved in it.

Some participants recognised that this broader concern for others was in some ways more acceptable as a motivation for getting involved than self-interest.

I think people tend to try and do things for other people rather than do something for yourself. They would tend to help people who need something or young children.

Self-interest was more acceptable when linked to the idea of a 'local community', with people happy to state that benefits to other communities were irrelevant to them – although some participants were anxious about the idea of wealthier areas applying the same logic.

If something is happening in the local community that's going to benefit me.

Could be you want to make a difference to the community. But it's local. It's all very well saying Scotland, England or Wales. That's national. But if it's a local benefit you may want to do that.

For me to hear that London and Glasgow and the big cities are spending billions of pounds doing a sports field and so on, that's irrelevant to me because my pound that I pay for the Lottery, I would like to see some of that revenue coming back locally where my children, grandchildren could benefit from that.

But what I'm saying is, these people would only be worried if their neighbourhood was to suffer because of it. They've got the money to buy into decent neighbourhoods. They would look after their own places. They wouldn't have a problem. [...] They shouldn't be allowed [to stay uninvolved].

Across the full range of participants in this research a very simple pattern emerges. The things people care about are closely tied up with their identities: how they see themselves and want to be seen by others. Who I am is in part defined by what I care about – the people I feel a responsibility to or for, the community or groups I feel part of, the places I identify with and the things I feel connected with. Caring about someone or something is as also a way of positioning oneself as a certain kind of person.

There are two basic ways in which caring can turn into a possible motivation for getting involved in some way. First, people may be motivated by **external threats** to the people or things they care about.

It was obviously the whole community that had got together and were making one concerted effort to try and save whatever it was. It was like being threatened and everyone joining together.

There was an issue with my area. They were going to knock down a whole lot of greenery around my house, where I live, and I was really against that. And there was a whole group, all our neighbours [...]. It was really nice having that greenery, and they were going to make big hotels there.

One thing that I notice, and I hardly ever vote, because it's just [pointless]. But then, because I live in East London, there's always something, and it's always like: oh, because no-one voted the BNP suddenly got this [councillor]. All of a sudden, everybody comes out and starts voting.

Threats such as these are often dramatised, accurately or not, in terms of a villainous 'they', with the need to stand up to unfairness being an important part of narratives of involvement.

Once the notification was going out about closing the hospitals down, then people got into the mood whereby collectively they said: no, the authorities are not going to do it. They're not going to do this and they're not going to do that and we're going to fight.

What got me involved was that people higher than me [weren't listening], that these people who were disabled and elderly were asking and just being pushed into the wall. [...] We could get up and go to these council meetings and we're here and we're not going away and we want this sorted out, and we'll go to anybody, we don't care.

Can we put down the unfairness of how some people get tricked?

Secondly, in the absence of any external threat, people may nevertheless be motivated by the **internal needs** of the people and things they care about.

If you can see somebody that's come out of a difficult situation, difficult lifestyle, and you can transform that even a little bit for them, so that they feel they've got something in life, then it's been achievable and worth it.

I do enjoy it and as far as the Meals on Wheels are concerned, lots of older people, they love to see you because lots of them don't have families, so you're there more or less for the pleasure, rather than waiting for their meal.

So you've got a poster of a little boy, for example, kicking a can in the street, and you say: would you like to give him a youth centre? If yes, call this number, and when they phone you say: three quick questions, can we have your opinions on this please?

Such needs can become even more compelling if they are conveyed through a direct request – although this can sometimes create a sense of feeling 'pressurised into involvement'.

I just went in as a parent helper. They were short staffed and they were struggling to put on different activities for the children because they didn't have the teachers, and the headmistress said: will you come along and be a help?

My daughter [...] is doing voluntary work in the community centre. She's dying to get me involved. She's working with MS sufferers, she's working with disabled people, swimming lessons and activities, so currently I'm under pressure from her.

This section began with an obvious point: that to motivate people to get involved, we have to tap into whatever it is they care about. The things people care about – the people they feel responsibility for, the community or groups they feel part of, the places they identify with, the things they feel connected with – are closely tied up with how they see themselves and want to be seen by others; and getting involved can be motivated by either threats to or the needs and requests of the people and things one care about.

When we turn from this general picture to the specific question of how to involve people in **decision-making**, an interesting challenge emerges. The simple fact is that when people talk about getting involved, they invariably mean getting involved in **doing something** to tackle a threat or meet a need. Decision-making about funding can feature in 'doing something' in three main ways:

1. When decisions threaten the people or things one cares about – in which case 'doing something' means **resisting the decision**.

There was a small parade of shops. It was quite a small town, a little dry cleaners and a little hardware shop. Quite old school, but there was a tendency for kids to loiter around there, and they wanted to put a fried chicken place there. And everyone got together, because they said it would increase loads of kids hanging around there late at night, because they generally open late.

Where I live [...] there's a huge part of green belt there, and they were going to put a cemetery on it. Needless to say, nobody wanted a cemetery on it, and I helped run a petition for that.

2. When decisions represent a 'waste', in contrast to the needs of the people and things one cares about – in which case 'doing something' means **complaining about the decision**.

My opinion is about things I don't want to happen, or not that I don't want to happen but I don't see any need for it. Oh, we're going to spend so much money putting in an enormous tree stump with a stupid thing on the top in the park. I think that could have gone to a school and that's what I think I'd be more inclined to get involved with, by saying: don't spend your money like that, that's ridiculous.

Yeah, the thing that bothers me about the allocation of the Lottery money, there are so many deserving charities who don't get anything.

3. When the possibility of ‘doing something’ depends on the decision – which happens when one is **bidding for funds**.

By contrast, getting involved in the process of decision-making itself does not fit easily into the model of ‘doing something’. More often, indeed, the process of decision-making is seen as something that **contrasts** with getting things done – and which appeals to a very particular kind of person.

There are groups of people out there, whether they be certain socioeconomic groups or whatever the case may be, who get some sort of satisfaction and are motivated in some way to do things like sit on adjudicating committees. They don't physically get involved in the actual projects that are going on on the ground, but they're one step back that you're talking about, and they're mainly people like retired business people or former city councillors. I know that there are a group of people there who take great pride in that. The same way you get satisfaction out of working on the ground, they get great satisfaction on being the planners or the directors.

In this country, we talk so long and our politicians here just seem to argue constantly and not decide anything ever, so here I'm just happy for anybody to make decisions. Let somebody make a decision over something.

Moreover, participants recognised that the process of deciding how to distribute funds is one that requires objectivity and balance to weigh different options against each other. This is very different from the kinds of motivations to get involved described above, which are intensely subjective and closely linked to individual identities. In short, people feel little motivation to get involved in something that doesn't first involve them.

Unless you're personally involved in what's going to happen, I think I would take a back seat and say, well, it doesn't really involve me. I don't really know why I should go and give my point of view because it's not really involving me.

Someone has to make that decision. [...] The Lottery made a contribution to set up to help actual prostitutes. There was a lot of conversing in the paper about that, but obviously somebody felt that there was a need for these people to have money, and there's been other cases in the past where there's been a lot of bad publicity about money that was awarded to certain projects that wasn't policed right and it all went wrong, but at the end of the day somebody has to do it.

The process of acting as an objective arbiter – or even of registering a ‘vote’ in a competition – can be very unappealing to people, as choosing one project invariably means putting another down. (Interestingly, as was noted earlier, people do consider it legitimate to favour a local project over one in another area, which may help to explain the relative success of People’s Millions compared to Your Pound, Your Choice.)

Sometimes it’s very hard if you’ve said yes to somebody and say no to someone else...

Sometimes if you ask someone’s opinion, I know in the initial stages if you ask for an opinion you get people saying: I don’t know. If you give them a choice – is it to the elderly, is it to the children, is it to buildings, is it to roads – that will open the dialogue, and when someone has to think those few answers, it’s like pulling teeth.

Again, the issue of how one sees oneself and how one wishes to be seen is critical.

I think a lot of people that I know don’t want to make those kind of decisions because how can you justify that one project is better than another? Because you’re not involved in that project so you can’t say if their idea is better than my idea, and especially that you don’t do that, you don’t put somebody else down and you don’t want to make those kind of decisions, because you’re putting yourself on a pedestal above somebody else. A lot of people don’t want to be seen as that, they want to be seen as kind and considerate and they want to be doing things and helping.

To summarise, an analysis of the need for people to care about opportunities to get involved suggests that people are already doing the very things that make sense to them – resisting, complaining and bidding – and that the thing they are not doing which we would like them to – get involved in the decision-making process itself – not only makes little sense, but can actually run contrary to what people really care about.

The reason most of us do the things we do is because we care, as you said, so trying to make decisions like that about how to distribute money, it defeats what we want to do in the first place.

This challenge is taken up again in Section 4, which looks at implications. The next section addresses a different challenge – namely that, even when people care, they do not always act.

3.3 People need to act

Sometimes people care so much about an issue that their emotion alone prompts action – especially in cases where the motivation is an external threat which creates an urgent need for action.

I've seen so many different types of people you would never suspect, suddenly, from nowhere, because the issue either affects them directly or they're very passionate about it. They get very involved. So it's anybody. People like old gentlemen in their 80s, suddenly, there's an issue and bang! He suddenly gets really involved.

The accounts offered by participants, however, make it clear that caring by no means guarantees action. Instead, the step from caring to action is governed by three 'filter questions'.

- Am I likely to make a difference?
- What else could I be doing with my time/energy here and now?
- What are other people doing?

These three filter questions are discussed in turn in the sub-sections that follow.

3.3.1 Am I likely to make a difference?

It is an unfortunate but unavoidable fact that any efforts to get the public more involved in decision-making will have to contend with a pervasive cynicism about existing democratic processes.

We feel a lot of these things are already done and dusted before you get anywhere near the committee. This is just a sop just to make you feel involved.

It's like, two million people have signed that, and what they're saying is: it doesn't really matter if you sign that petition or not, because we're not really going to listen to you. So why bother?

Asking people is going through the motions, to say: oh, we've asked people and we've got this, but maybe they know what they want to do anyway.

There's a lot of apathy and it's because people are becoming disillusioned with everything these days. You vote for a government and what happens? Nothing that you wanted to see gets done. The same with the Lottery, why should I bother?

The mistrust of those in power – the ‘they’ who play the dramatic roles of villains when threatening or wasteful decisions are resisted or complained about (see Section 3.2) – is not only widespread; it also tends to spill over to encompass those who are in charge of distributing Lottery funds.

I think it's a disillusionment with the people who've got the power to deliver. Councils for example [...] I know a couple of characters on the council that I find unbelievable, you know, that's on a personal level, and I know what they're like and they're running things for the community and they make decisions on how money's spent...

I think the higher you get up, I think they live in a world of their own and they forget what it's like on the bottom who they're representing.

What I said earlier about having a panel for the Lottery Fund, you have a certain idea of the people on these panels and that's the opinion you have of these people.

The them-and-us narrative of mistrust which runs through the accounts offered of existing ‘public involvement’ mechanisms emphasises a number characteristics which define the **sort of people** that have power and influence in society – such as education, wealth, class and age. (A feeling of social division was especially prominent in the workshop conducted in London.)

Sorry to say if you looked at a council election, the majority of people standing if you know anything about them have had quite a decent education and generally come from a family name that's known to have had some wealth. And that again comes back to the bit about they have more time, because of their wealth and position.

Sometimes you think money talks and sometimes you think of people who sit on these boards, they're completely detached from reality and they're the ones making the decisions. They're not going to listen to Joe Public.

He [character card] doesn't actually care that this money's going here, or this money's going here. He hasn't got any care in the world, because he's got enough money of his own to do what he wants. He's got his kids going to private school.

It's all about, they're in their houses up there, and we're down here. There's no association with each other. There's no middle ground anywhere.

I do think that you're never going to get away from class distinction.

With young people you don't have the respect from older people to make those kinds of decisions.

There's always a hierarchy. We all sound like a bit of social outcasts!

The concept of a sort of person who has influence, of course, leaves many feeling that they can make no difference precisely because they are not the right sort of person. The belief that one will not be

able to make a difference may be felt, that is, less as a lack of confidence in the system than as a lack of confidence in oneself. This is especially the case where having a say requires one to disagree openly with the points of views offered by others.

Sometimes if you're never listened to you think: what's the point in speaking out? That can happen in school or work or all areas of daily life. So you do have to feel a certain amount of self-worth.

Even if you did get in, once you're in the group, all it takes is for two or three of them to group together and then that's you.

People say, oh, I'll just sit here and be quiet because that's how everybody is. People are small fish.

I feel very often at a meeting where I'm the odd one out, I disagree with something but afterwards when you're talking quietly, a lot of people agreed with you but they wouldn't say so in the meeting.

One participant, who had acquired an understanding of decision-making processes from his time in the civil services, noted that this lack of self-confidence could be exacerbated by unfamiliarity with the kinds of decision being made and the process involved.

I think that's why it probably does put some people off getting involved in determining how you're going to spend some money. If they haven't done that in a working environment – ok, we all run households and we know what we can spend and what we should spend and prioritise, but perhaps some people have been frightened off going outside of that really, taking what they perceive might be a bigger responsibility.

Convincing people that they can make a difference, then, is not just about making **processes** transparent. It is also about changing the way **people** perceive themselves – and, as part of that, giving them the skills and confidence they need to get involved. This no easy challenge: but participants agreed that tackling it, and getting truly diverse groups of people involved in decision-making, would be an essential part of any meaningful public involvement agenda.

You're never going to get everyone involved all of the time and you're never going to get everyone to want to get involved, but it's important to get a truly representative [group] to get involved. You need a cross-section of people to get a representative solution.

You need people from all sorts of different walks of life to get the input and the output that you require for the thing that you need.

There is an issue as well that in a small community, they tend to be prominent, they tend to be committee people, as you say, and you can make other people stand back and say: oh, they're doing it again so just let them go. It's important to try and bring some fresh people in.

3.3.2 What else could I be doing with my time/energy here and now?

Any organisation trying to get people involved needs to recognise that, for most of the population, involvement has to **compete** with many other things that people could be doing at the same time.

They don't want to be involved because it's taking time from something else that they could be doing that they want to do, you know.

There are only so many hours to do everything you want to do. I really struggle to get the kids off, get them dressed, get them to school, come home, drop my little girl off at either crèche or my nan's, go to work, come home from work, sit down with the kids, do what I've got to do, cook the tea, get the kids bathed, in bed. Everything is rush, rush, rush and you don't have time. Everything is just – oh, one thing rolls into the next and before you know it it's 12 o'clock, and you haven't done your course work, you haven't done your ironing. Even though it takes two seconds to fill in a questionnaire, it's still taking your time out to put that effort in.

I think it's like reading a newspaper. You pick up a newspaper, if there's something really interesting you'll read it, and if it's not interesting you pass it over. It's really the same thing. If you're interested, you'll go, and if you're not, well, you just won't go.

It's getting them to leave the television, because there's that many soaps on. They think it's real life, and they will not leave their television if Coronation Street's on or something like that, they want to watch that. They'll miss a meeting because they want to watch that.

Even within the sphere of involvement, there is competition between all the different things one could get involved in.

There's so many issues nowadays. There's so many issues going on, and it just seems to be growing and growing, and sometimes you think: how many things can I sign? How many things can I do?

Why do people choose one activity over another? Competing alternatives may appear to offer **better outcomes** (e.g. a solution to a more pressing need, or more of an impact on the people/things a person cares about, or greater personal benefits), or a **better process** (e.g. one that is more enjoyable or appropriate to the time and place). However, in making choices about what to do, people rely on their assumptions and expectations about outcomes and processes, which may or not be accurate. Making getting involved more competitive as an activity is therefore about *both* changing the realities of getting involved *and* correcting people's misperceptions.

On the **outcomes** side, a critical question – already discussed in the previous section – is whether getting involved will actually make a difference to the people and things one cares about. Participants emphasised the need to tell a credible and personal story about involvement which linked the time invested to these kinds of outcome.

The Lottery could affect her life. Does she have children? Would it benefit her to have more facilities for her children? Does she have elderly parents who again would benefit from something that the Lottery fund could help out with? Could it make her working day shorter so she had more time in the day? And if she hasn't got time [doesn't make time] then these things will not benefit her whatsoever. So it would benefit her to have a say.

Different strategies will work for different segments, because there's no point in going to young people and saying these are the projects that are going to help if it's not relevant. You have to target the way you're going to ask people in their age group to get the maximum response. If you treat everyone the same, it isn't really going to work.

Participants also identified a number of other kinds of personal and professional benefit which might make involvement more competitive as an activity.

Doing something like that for charity or an organisation like that, it would look fantastic on your CV. Obviously something like that would help him along.

This is a great opportunity to meet people of your own class. You might get an MBE. [...] Networking, meeting people, that type of thing. [...] To get professional people involved, first you've got to play on that little bit of greed.

Payment for involvement was identified by some participants as a very obvious positive outcome – which might also help to simplify the process for those with, for example, care responsibilities.

Maybe if she got paid, would that make a difference if she hasn't got time? It would make a big difference if she got paid. [...] If she was going to get paid she could get somebody in to look after that person, she might be able to attend the meetings then.

In this context, it is worth noting that, in an age when market research and consultation are ubiquitous, people are likely to see 'having a say' not as their **being given** an opportunity or privilege, but as their **being asked to supply** legitimacy. The idea of being paid for this service does not seem at all out of place.

I think it would be expected to be paid if they're going to do these jobs as well.

Interestingly, a number of participants who had been involved in charitable work noted the importance of avoiding one possible negative outcome of getting involved: getting sucked in. To feel comfortable about getting involved, people need to feel confident they will be supported in setting boundaries on that involvement.

Do not let them involve you too much, because they'll leave everything to you and then you can't get out of it.

I just get involved in things, if I go to a meeting and I'm not going to take part in it, I can't resist it and I end up getting a job and that's just how it goes.

Yeab, you want to help but then you think: well, if I do go, how far is it going to go? What am I going to end up doing?

I wouldn't like to be a chief. I'd rather be an Indian and help in the background. I've been a chief once and I don't like being a chief.

In smaller communities in particular, participants also worried about the potential negative impact of being identified with a choice or position which may prove unpopular.

Yeab, like D was saying, if she got up and said something that might be affecting what she was talking about in school or something. The next day she goes to school and everyone's like, wow, giving her a hard time about it.

I think it's more fear of it coming back to them. [...] Because they've got totally involved in it, and they're just frightened in case somebody, you know, is totally against them.

On the **process** side, whether or not the process will be enjoyable is an important factor. Given differences in preference and style, participants recognised the need for varied ways of getting involved to suit different people. They also noted a number of ways in which getting involved can prove to be a rather unpleasant process.

You've got to have bit of excitement and have a joke.

Ultimately, a committee is about being a committee, and you can sit there for hours and not getting anything done, it becomes for quagmire, and it is for some people, it's not for others.

In practice I wouldn't be the person that would be going to lots of meetings or going to rallies or anything like that. Sign the petition, put a form in a letterbox, I would do if I really cared. On a big active level, I probably wouldn't, realistically.

We have a meeting about a meeting about a meeting. We have to go through so many levels and here this just goes on forever. No decisions ever seem to be made about anything.

People who are busy don't want to be fighting. [...] Why does it have to be a battle?

Getting involved can also be made more competitive by enhancing its ease, convenience and accessibility.

I think more old people [...] would go [to a meeting] if there was transport there to take them to the building, because one thing is people won't go out in wet weather and also the climate of people who are knocking around the street corners, for people to walk there...

...the blood bus would come around regularly and park up in the town square, and if I was passing then I would pop in and I would give blood. But I wouldn't go out of my way to track down a session. If I don't know it's happening, if they don't come to me and make it quick and easy, then I'm not going to do it...

I don't think the youth of today are going to make any great strides towards going to council meetings and things like that. If you did go to where they are already, and try to speak to them on their level I suppose, then you might have a chance.

If you've got time to sit down and watch the news, you've got time to go onto interactive or something like that.

There is an interesting potential for tension, however, between the drive to make the process of getting involved accessible by taking it to where people already are and the need to make it an appealing and enjoyable process compared to the other activities on offer. Consider the following dialogue:

A: Most people go after work for a drink. I guarantee you'd get that person, that person and this person, definitely, in that wine bar. You'd get at least three of these people in the wine bar.

B: But if you're in a wine bar, you've just had a long day.

A: But if there's stuff on the table.

B: No.

There were in particular a number of discussions about the appropriateness of the **home** as a setting for involvement activity – with many feeling it was not a good setting even for relatively non-intrusive approaches such as questionnaires.

I think when you go home you have pressures of family. I don't know if it's a guilt thing, but you know you've got the children and you've got the partners, you've got everybody else who are demanding your time and that's where you want to give your time at night at home. But when you're out and about doing various things you're out of that environment.

I think sometimes, especially in families with a lot of people working, when you go behind your door and close your door you want the time for yourself to relax and chill out and that's your time then. You're

involved in all sorts of things during the day, you go in, you close the door. Unless something really awful is about to threaten you and you really have to do something, you don't always want to be, and actually there's a lot of demand, there are a lot of questionnaires.

By contrast, **work** (or for younger participants school or college) was felt to be a much more suitable setting for involvement activity by many (though not all) participants – both because one's frame of mind at work is better suited, and also because the other activities on offer are less competitive.

When you go home, you switch off and you're with your children or something, but when you're at work it's easier.

If I was at work, I wouldn't mind if they phoned me up.

I think that if it's involved within the course [at college], you've got more chance of knowing about it and if your friends are getting involved, you'd get involved as well.

If your work is involved in something, you can build up a good reputation at the same time.

Something that will break up your working day. The other day a Unicef catalogue came in, and I would never think of donating to them [...] It was something that was handed to me and it got me away from work for a minute. It interested me.

When and where people are given the opportunity to get involved can make a big difference to the competitiveness of getting involved as an activity. But there is one further complication around timing which needs to be considered. The competitive landscape looks very different at different times of one's life, and approaches to getting people involved need to be adjusted accordingly.

There are points and places that you are in the time of your life, there are places where ultimately you've got loads of time, as you're growing up, as a teenager – oh, my God, we've hit middle age where you're working round the clock and have kids and pushing, pushing, pushing, and then hopefully you make it to another part in your life where all of a sudden some of those commitments go and then you pick up other commitments.

As you get older, I think time gets in the way and you only deal with things that really do affect you.

Especially if you've retired from a very active job, it's an important step to keep motivated, somewhere to go, something to do at that point.

3.3.3 What are other people doing?

From the perspective of an organisation such as BIG, it is easy to conceptualise the challenge of public involvement in terms of getting people more involved *in our decision-making*. From the perspective of many of the participants in our research, however, getting involved is essentially about doing something *with other people*. The social context of involvement – what others are doing and not doing, and how one’s own activity positions one with respect to them – is an essential feature of individual motivations to get involved.

At the simplest level, the fact that other people are doing the same thing can make the **process** of getting involved more pleasant – and therefore more competitive in comparison with other activities on offer.

I like meeting people as well, and that’s one of the main things.

I get e-mails, so the e-mails go about and you can write into the forum if you want, so it’s good banter.

It’s the sense of camaraderie that you win together and you lose together, and also meeting people from other schools and other people that you wouldn’t necessarily meet by staying in school.

You know what, she looks a bit lonely, and I would have said that it might be the fact that she might meet neighbours she might not have otherwise known.

I’m not saying he’s got nothing better to do, but he does enjoy discussing openly with people.

The involvement of others can also increase the chances of a positive **outcome** – and, provided they share the same point of view, can also boost the **confidence** of individuals who are hesitating about whether their voice really matters.

It’s strength in numbers, because then as a whole group you’ve got the strength that you wouldn’t have as an individual.

If she had people behind her going, actually, no, it’s okay to say we don’t want our roads congested, and we want better transport, we want more cycle lanes, she might think: oh, okay, I can make a difference if I say something. Because you need people behind you, you need to know that what you’re thinking is what other people are thinking as well.

It’s okay when we’re sitting here in a group. You get an idea, and you realise: oh, someone else has got that idea as well, so it makes that idea a bit more powerful. But she looks pretty alone with it, and she’ll be thinking: well, maybe my idea isn’t up to much.

You really need to get her to involve her friends as well, because a person on her own, she probably thinks I'm of no use on my own. But if she got together with her friends, with friends you've got confidence.

However, the behaviour of others does not just make the process of getting involved more enjoyable and the chances of a positive outcome higher. **Joining in** is a motivator in its own right, with potentially positive implications for how a person sees themselves. It is also far easier and more appealing for most people to join in with something than to break ranks and be the first mover.

If they feel like they're a part of it, they're more likely to take part.

I think if you do things in groups, you get a lot more response. People individually don't want to get involved, because they're a little nervous, a little bit apprehensive, especially if they're a little bit quiet and reserved.

...if everybody else is doing it they get involved as well. [...] if one person stands up and says something, then they're a nutter, but if everybody gets up and does it, then they can do something and these people obviously feel like if I get up and say something I'm a nutter.

The motivational pull of joining in is further enhanced by the power of **personal requests** in engaging people. Many of the stories participants told about things they had got involved in, for instance, featured a request or invitation from someone else as a starting point.

Initially I got roped in because my neighbour was doing this and they were a bit short of staff one night, so I went along to help out, and then three years later I was still there and it's enjoyable, makes you feel good.

3.3.4 Hooks and sustainers

In the sub-sections above we have reviewed three 'filter questions' which govern the step from caring to action. One interesting by-product of the way these three filters on action operate is that getting involved can make people more (or less) likely to *stay* involved. This is because getting involved can change how people see themselves and want to be seen; alter their views of whether they are likely to make a difference; and transform their expectations of what the process will be like.

I felt like, those people, you know, they don't want me, I've got no education, I couldn't turn a computer on if you paid me £1,000 to do it, I can't write out minutes of a meeting and I can't even write that fast. Then once I actually got there and I listened to what people were saying, and then, you know: 'D,

we need you now, you can't leave us, you're involved in this'. And I started thinking, right, okay, yeah, I can do this. I went to college; I did some part time lessons on literacy and different things, I did a quick computer course to learn how to do Microsoft Word so I could do those fancy fliers and posters and type out the minutes.

Moreover, as a result of the 'joining in' effect, each person that gets involved contributes to the chances that others will get involved, creating (in the ideal scenario) a cascade of involvement.

Yes, you've got to have that wide range and like the people we've got on here [in the workshop], if you could engage them, they then go to their workplace or their schools and will engage somebody else who is similar and say, well, I went and so go along, the word of mouth thing about being receptive to ideas is important.

We saw some evidence of these effects even in short workshops, were people reported changes in their perspectives at the end of a moderated two-hour discussion.

I wasn't interested in the National Lottery, they spend their money on whatever they spend their money on, I was more like this person, I don't really know what to say and I'm not the kind of person to stand up and state in front of all these people, so me being here tonight and talking in front of all of these strangers has actually proved something to me, that I can actually do it and my say does matter.

Planned approaches to involving the public need to take these effects into consideration, and consider both how to *hook* people initially and how to *sustain* their involvement. Moreover, these two types of motivation may be very different, with some factors such as personal requests or payment playing an important role as hooks, and others, such as the quality of the experience and evidence of impact, being more important in the long term.

You've got to give those people that initial push. Once they're there, they're there for life. It's getting them there. That was the hard bit for me. [...] and really make them feel like, yes, you are welcome, yes, you're wanted, yes, you do matter, and just keeping that up as well. It's alright saying: yeah, we've got you here, right, you push them to the back of the pile now, you've said what you need to say, we're not interested in you any more. It's keeping the people, keeping the opinions regulated and getting their input and making them feel they're involved, not just tossed aside.

4. Implications

The understanding of motivations to get involved presented in Section 3 suggests six **principles** for future activity to promote public involvement. These are discussed in turn in the sections that follow. For each principle, we identify the basic issue that the principle seeks to address, and provide an example of the kind of public involvement activity that might put the principle into practice.

4.1 Make getting involved something that matters

ISSUE: The idea of getting involved in decision-making is at best detached from people's motivations, at worst unappealing

Our analysis of the need for people to care about opportunities to get involved suggests that people are in fact already doing the things that make sense to them – resisting decisions, complaining about decisions, and bidding for funds (see Section 3.2). By contrast, the thing that we would like them to do – get involved in the decision-making process itself – not only makes little sense, but can actually run contrary to what people really care about. In particular the recognition that decision-making has to be objective is in tension with the highly personal, subjective nature of caring, which is strongly tied up with how people see themselves and want to be seen by others.

This observation raises a deep question about public involvement: what are we involving people *as*? Democratic institutions such as voting typically involve people on the basis of what they have in common – as citizens, for instance. Motivations to get involved, by contrast, spring from the differences between people – their individual concerns and perspectives. To motivate people to get involved, it is not enough just to make the mechanisms of involvement more accessible or convenient: we also have to reconnect those mechanisms with people *as individuals*.

Interestingly, this was a challenge we faced in the design of our research process (see Section 2). On the basis of our pre-research phase, we engaged participants in developing a vision for how they would like to spend money locally as a way of building a scenario they would actually care about.

One participant commented explicitly on the contrast between this individualised approach and some of the more traditional mechanisms for involvement she and others discussed later in the workshop:

[Commenting on involvement mechanisms] I think simply because it is, again, it's not anything that I'm passionate about, unless it's really demonstrated to me. You'd have to convince me [...] From what you've told me, I haven't gone, oh wow, that sounds fantastic. But the conversations we were having earlier were good. Like, we were all going, pick something. And maybe if you almost did what you've done here, and said, we have picked you and we want you to do this. Would you consider doing it? That direct... You can almost say to everyone. And then you said, well, this is what we want to do. What do you reckon? That's the only way I'd get involved.

To engage people in decision-making, we have to make decision-making feel more like **doing something**. Engaging people in building a vision for someone or something they care about – for a local area, for instance, or a group of people – is likely to meet with much more success than asking people to act as objective arbiters and choose one priority or project over another.

EXAMPLE: Building on existing BIG models, allocate funds to local areas on the condition that local people are genuinely involved in creating a vision for how this money is spent (and *not* just in responding to questionnaires). Provide guidance on how to do this, based on these six principles.

4.2 Convince people they count

ISSUE: Not only do people lack faith in ‘the authorities’; they also lack faith in themselves as individuals whose views can and ought to carry weight

There is a widespread mistrust of existing public involvement mechanisms and of the ‘authorities’ that use (or abuse) them (see Section 3.3.1). People readily identify the sort of person who has power and influence, emphasising such characteristics as education, wealth, class and age – and many believe strongly that, because they are not this sort of person, they have no influence. Convincing

people that they can make a difference, then, is not just about making processes transparent (though that is certainly important): it is also about changing the way people perceive themselves.

Participants in this research were very clear that the key here was evidence. Before I get involved, I need to see the evidence that other people **like me** have already got involved.

Showing them that it has been done before by people in the same position.

[To get me to get involved] guarantee me that other people like myself would get involved.

Then, once I have started to get involved, I need to see evidence that my opinion really has made some difference (or, if it has not, an explanation of why it has not).

Seeing something that he's voted on, and that little thing for him sends a big message out, to build his self-esteem and by seeing the result it will get him on board.

It is worth noting that making public involvement work along these lines requires much more than simply giving # people the opportunity to express an opinion. Additional work is needed to ensure they believe it's worth expressing an opinion, to help them express that opinion cogently in a way that gets it listened to, and to communicate back what impact that opinion has had. All of this additional work means, of course, additional investment of resources: but the important message is that, without that additional investment, money spent merely on giving people an opportunity to have a say can be not only wasted but counter-productive.

EXAMPLE: Run a campaign based on the question 'What kind of person gets involved?' which deliberately tackles self-stereotyping. Ensure that the examples given are real examples of people, and ensure that issues of social class in particular are tackled as part of the campaign.

4.3 Ensure getting involved competes against the alternatives

ISSUE: People will not get involved if the experience and outcomes compare poorly to other activities available at the same time and place

Any organisation trying to get people involved needs to recognise that, for most of the population, involvement has to compete with the many other things people could be doing at the same time (see Section 3.3.2). Competing alternatives may offer better outcomes (e.g. a solution to a more urgent need, or a greater impact on the people/things a person cares about, or greater personal benefits) or a better process (e.g. one that is more enjoyable or appropriate to the time and place).

Because getting involved needs to compete with alternatives, the time and place when people are invited to get involved are critical. In particular, a number of participants in this research felt they would be more likely to get involved if they could do so through work-based schemes, possibly sponsored as part of organisation's CSR commitments. A break from work is intrinsically much more appealing; and many (though not all) people felt that the process of decision-making fitted better with the kind of identity they needed to adopt at work (typically more public and objective) than with their personal time.

I was listening, obviously, to everything that's been said and, as regards time, yeah, I think a lot of us are very busy, and I was wondering whether there was any way that perhaps companies, especially big names – Woolworths, Iceland, Somerfield, Co-op – whether they could actually sponsor, for want of a better word, a person from their store because they haven't got time at home and their home life is precious, whether they could sponsor in some way so that a member of staff, if they were interested, would still get paid but it would be in their time. It would be in work time.

EXAMPLE: Launch a work-based involvement scheme in partnership with employers, offering employers a chance to deliver on CSR responsibilities and also to build stronger connections with local communities. Young people might be targeted through school/college-based schemes, with potential links to Citizenship education or learner involvement initiatives.

4.4 Make getting involved about joining in

ISSUE: Involvement activities that seek to engage people only as individuals may miss out on one of the key drivers of action

Joining in is a motivator in its own right, with potentially positive implications for how the person getting involved sees themselves (see Section 3.3.3). Getting involved with other people can also have very positive impacts on how enjoyable the process is and on the perceived likelihood of actually making a difference.

I think when you get something like that [a consultation], they think: one voice won't help. My opinion's not going to matter. They'll probably send millions of these out so if I chuck mine in the bin it's not going to make a difference.

Many traditional involvement mechanisms, such as consultation documents or ballots, target individuals in isolation. There are very good reasons why this is done: group discussions, for instance, can lead to phenomena such as group-think, and make it harder for dissenting voices to be heard. These risks are real and need to be addressed. Attention must also be paid, however, to the risks on the other side: that by targeting individuals in isolation we create a process which is fair but which omits one of the key motivations to get involved.

EXAMPLE: Focus publicity for new involvement opportunities on the idea of 'joining in', rather than the individualistic idea of 'having your say'. Even very individualistic activities like voting can be made more communal: e.g. BBC website polls 'reward' votes by letting voters see how others have voted.

4.5 Consider ways to jump-start involvement

ISSUE: Until people get involved, they may not be motivated to get involved; and until a few people lead the way, others may not follow

Getting involved can make people more (or less) likely to stay involved – because the experience of getting involved can change how people see themselves and want to be seen; alter their views of whether they are likely to make a difference; and transform their expectations of what the process will be like (see Section 3.3.4). There is real value in distinguishing the initial *hooks* for involvement from the motivations that will *sustain* involvement, which (paradoxically) may only develop as a result of being involved. (In our research, for instance, participants were hooked by the fact they would be remunerated for their participation in the research; but many reported active engagement in the process by the end of workshops.)

Organisations seeking to promote public involvement can feel justifiably awkward about what can seem like ‘bribes’ for getting involved. People, the argument goes, are not really getting involved if they are only turning up for some extrinsic benefit such as financial reward. On the other hand, our research suggests that people may only begin to develop a deeper motivation to participate and get involved if they already have some experience of doing so. We need to find ways to catalyse involvement in the first place. The participants in our research were clear that this was critical to kick-starting any kind of serious involvement.

I think you've just got to give them encouragement. That's the main thing, getting them there in the first place.

Advertise that there's going to be something very special, and everybody would turn up then. If you could think of something that everybody would like and it would encourage people to go to the meetings.

Pay me!

EXAMPLE: Provide incentives to kick-start involvement – payment, food, socialising opportunities. Enlist ordinary people in involving others – a personal request is far more engaging than an impersonal one. Provide resources and support for involvement ‘leaders’, as an investment in future involvement.

4.6 Get the message out

ISSUE: Unless people know how what BIG does impacts on the things they care about, the foundation of public involvement will be missing

Understanding the things that can really motivate people to get involved can help us to create new, more engaging public involvement mechanisms. Ultimately, however the success of any of these messages – and of the principles outlined above, depends on effective communications – not just to explain how to get involved, but also to create a **context of involvement** in which getting involved really makes sense to people (see Section 3.1). Effective communications will cut across the principles outlined above, engaging the public not as isolated, abstract citizens with rights or duties to have a say, but as real people in real social networks, with a sense of who they are and how they want to be seen, and with their own individual concerns, preferences and aspirations.

EXAMPLE: Ensure that BIG's funding is communicated at the level of people's concerns – e.g. through targeted communications in local newspapers or the specialist press. Look for opportunities to report on involvement too, e.g. using a 'You said x – BIG funded y' model.