



We were delighted to host the very first in our Masterclass series, on 'Participatory Budgeting (PB)' on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2018 in Glasgow and then again on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2018 in Aberdeen. The event was delivered by PB partners, who have led the development of many PB processes related to community safety and policing within a wide range of contexts and communities across the UK. It was aimed at community safety partners, policy makers, and those working within community participation, engagement and empowerment.



As the Scottish Government is promoting Participatory Budgeting (PB) through the 'Community Choices' programme, we want to help our members build their capacity to embed PB as a tool and deliver PB initiatives within their community engagement work. In Scotland to date, PB projects have related to the creation of safer communities and included representatives from community planning or community safety partnerships. There is also future scope for Community Safety Partnerships to distribute funding using this model. Moreover, there is a wish for PB to go beyond a grants model to one that sits at the heart of mainstream budget making and local priority setting, future strategy and policy creation.



The first learning event in Glasgow was led by Dr Andrew Fisher and provided an overview and history of PB, including experiences in Scotland to date, a look at 'participatory small grants' and

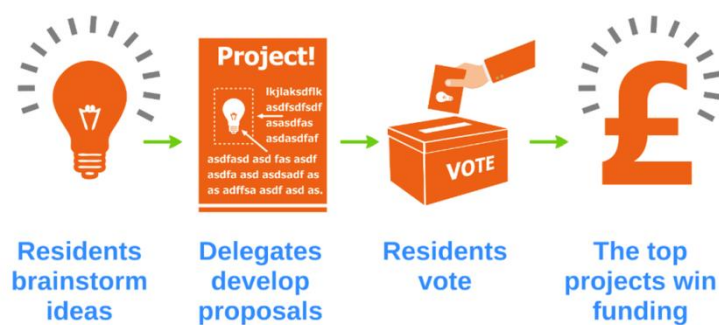
'mainstream' models of PB including the challenges posed by PB, such as issues around fairness, democratic accountability, and mainstreaming and guidance on practical ways to take community safety related PB forward. There were videos of case studies and group sessions giving people the opportunity to share their own experiences of PB as well as explore how they might organise their own event.

The second learning event, facilitated by Jez Hall of PB Partners, covered the same areas but, after feedback from the first session, we spent more time on the planning of a PB event as well as inviting Simon Cameron from CoSLA, to speak in more depth about mainstreaming PB into local authority budgets. We also had Paul Nelis from SCDC present about the PB Charter.

This learning report pulls a summary of both days together with the formal and reflective feedback to give readers a sense of the days and the major learning points. The PowerPoint presentations from the day have been sent to participants and are available on request for others.

## Definitions and history

### How does participatory budgeting work?



PB began in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in the 1980's and has since become a worldwide phenomenon. Broadly, PB is defined as 'local people in making decisions on the spending and priorities for a defined public budget.' In Scotland, the Scottish Government is promoting Participatory Budgeting (PB) through the 'Community Choices'

programme. Already, the vast majority of local authorities have engaged in PB under a wide range of themed projects. In the main, PB events have consisted of an event where the community vote to allocate funds to their chosen projects. There is a significant appetite for PB in Scotland with 96% stating they think they should be involved in making decisions about how local services are planned and run. The principles on which PB was born, e.g. transparency, representative democracy, accessibility, local ownership and shared responsibility supports many of the Scottish Government's objectives in theory and in practice, such as: Open Government Programme, Public Service Reform, Local Governance review, Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the drive towards co-production.

## Benefits of PB

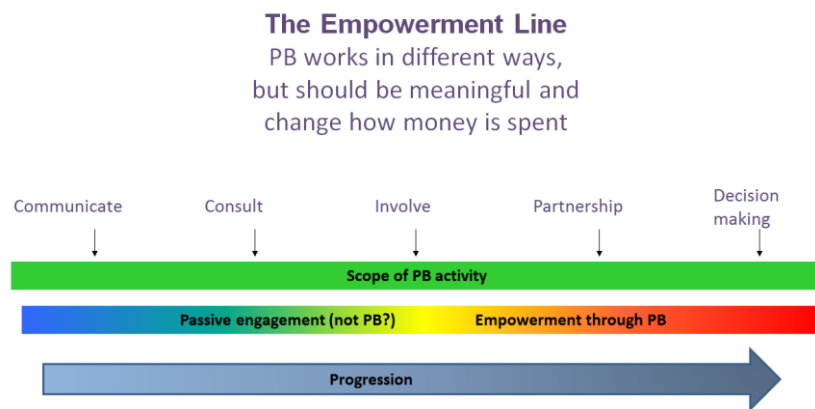
PB can connect and complement the existing democratic processes. Elected members/officials can become leaders and facilitators of an empowering community process – with the principles put into action, they enhance the democratic understanding of what communities

Increase	quality and quantity of community engagement (more deliberative, inclusive and transparent);
Increase	trust in politics and in politicians
Stimulate	dialogue and positive action within communities
Encourage	well targeted public investments.

would spend their money on and are therefore able to make better informed spending decisions. Specific benefits of using PB as a tool within a community safety context are improved partnership working, improved understanding in communities, empowered communities and reduced dependency.

## Mainstreaming PB

In October 2017, the Scottish Government and CoSLA agreed at least 1% of local government budgets will be subject to PB by 2021. The 1% is a minimum, can be formed from any budget and is for local authorities to decide how to take forward at a local level. It is agreed that mainstream PB needs defined. At the national PB



Scotland conference in 2017, it was recommended that a PB Charter be developed to officially define PB and outline the guiding principles for policy and practice. In addition, PB is being discussed widely with communities as part of the Scottish Government's

'Democracy Matters' conversations, which will look further at how PB can be embedded into how we work across public and third sectors.

## The PB Charter

The new PB Charter that is being developed will underpin the principles that PB practices need to be based on. These are:

*Inclusivity* - That equalities are considered from the start and that barriers such as stigma, discrimination, unconscious bias, poor transport and accessibility are considered.

*Participatory* - that people have their say and can influence options and decisions. Ensuring there are opportunities at every stage of the process for people to get involved.

*Centred on Dialogue* - By having the right information, sharing ideas, considering different views and listening to one another, people can make better choices together.

*Transformational* - PB should encourage citizens to become actively involved in decision making. PB should change how people interact with all sectors and help towards a more deliberative democracy.

*Innovative and Creative* - The right mix of approaches from face to face to online, working with new technologies and taking risks.

*Transparent and accountable* - The purpose of PB should be clear and information available at all stages.

*Sustainable* – PB Processes should be able to demonstrate impact. PB should be embedded in practice as standard and people should expect to have their voices heard through PB.

More information on the PB Charter including an online survey and webinar, visit [www.PBScotland.scot](http://www.PBScotland.scot)

## The PB cycle/matrix

Participants were taken in detail through the 10 stages of the PB cycle/matrix. A key point is that there is **participatory activity at all stages**. While it is hard to measure the social impact that falls out of PB, there is growing evidence that shows community led governance improves if PB is done on a year by year basis.

### 10 steps to PB

1. Secure funds
2. Form a steering/planning group
3. Give your PB process a name
4. Agree your criteria
5. Inform and engage with the participants, primarily through other local groups
6. Invite and receive applications
7. Hold your decision event
8. Funding distribution
9. Project delivery monitoring and scrutiny
10. Evaluation

## Group sessions

In groups, participants discussed and planned running their own Community Safety PB event. Participants were shown examples of Community Safety themed PB events such as: <https://pbnetwork.org.uk/category/themes/policing/> and <https://www.mutualgain.org/training/participatory-budgeting/> Online PB tools were encouraged as they help build engagement and accessibility. Grant making through PB, the most popular and used method in Scotland so far, is a great way of enthusing, networking and engaging with local people. Key discussion points were around the benefit of having the community involved in the real costs of services as well as building trust between local authorities and the community and the idea of 'positive risk taking'.

Groups also gathered to discuss overcoming the challenges of PB. Some challenges identified were around getting the criteria right, setting budgets, ensuring the process is fair and transparent, communicating with the community - especially to 'hard to reach' members. Other barriers discussed were the issue of maintaining long term buy-in, measuring impact, equality and representation.

Suggestions to overcome the challenges centred on setting themes, allocating lots of planning time, using digital tools, having a PB Champion at work and more resources into community development.

## Feedback

The Glasgow event was attended by 18 people, comprised mostly from our membership but with attendance from a few voluntary sector organisations. The Aberdeen event had 20 attendees, mostly from our membership and partners.

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*“Informative – good networking opportunity”  
Participant*

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We circulated an evaluation form to gather some feedback from participants at both events. Jointly, the average rating for the day was 4.3 out of 5. When asked the best thing about the session – the most popular responses mentioned the group sessions and their participatory nature, learning from the experiences of others and the Scottish approach to PB. When asked what might have worked better, answers included – more discussion time, more information on mainstreaming (which we tackled in the second session) and that the session needs to be delivered to higher level managers. The participants felt in the future they would like to discuss further: overcoming criticisms of PB, supporting marginalised groups to access PB and shared learning.

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*“Very useful to demonstrate PB approach in Scotland”*  
*Participant*

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We had some great questions, really interesting conversations and positive feedback from participants; with a great sense of enthusiasm for PB in the room and its potential within the safer communities sector.

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*“Presentations excellent and involved people effectively”*  
*Participant*

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Learning points for SCSN from these events are:

- To keep the conversations and enthusiasm for PB going.
- To work harder still to reduce the 'disconnect' between strategic engagement with the idea and the operational challenges.
- To continue to share learning widely and supporting our members and partners to do this.
- To champion PB and celebrate Scotland's achievements to date.
- To encourage and support members to find ways to mainstream and embed PB in their workplaces.

We'll continue to link in with partners such as Scottish Government, PB Partners, PB Scotland, CoSLA to share learning and keep the conversations and enthusiasm for PB high; we encourage you to do the same; and consider ways to mainstream and embed PB in your workplaces.