

Putting it into practice
Tools to support tackling inactivity
through system change

Understand the lived experience

Update published July 2022

Understand the lived experience

This understanding the lived experience resource will help to guide you through the tools, models and approaches being used by places to tackle inactivity through implementing a place-based approach. This is one of nine sections of our collective resource 'Putting It Into Practice' which is organised by what we've found to be some of the practicalities of system change. The full resource can be found [on our website](#).

Without a genuine understanding of the way that people live, it's impossible to understand how their lives are shaped by factors outside their control. By starting with people and what matters to them, we can work together to create more meaningful change.



Questions you might be asking:

- How can I better understand the lived experiences of local communities?
- How can I have meaningful conversations?
- How can I identify patterns between stories that can inform change?

Creative
engagement
toolkit

Together
an Active
Future



Sensemaker



Creative Engagement Toolkit

Together an Active Future (TaAF)

Pennine Lancashire

Local Delivery Pilot

The commitment to the ‘how’ rather than the ‘what’ has been a key focus of the Pennine Lancashire LDP. There are key elements of the TaAF approach that are fundamental in the effectiveness and value of the LDP for a diverse range of people and partners from across the six Local Authority boroughs that make up Pennine Lancashire.

One fundamental element is Creative Engagement (which includes The Look, The Sound, The Feel). This isn’t a published model but an approach that has been developed and applied locally, with the impact and learning documented as part of the overall TaAF evaluation.



Name: Creative Engagement

Why would I use it?

- Creative Engagement is an effective way of engaging and involving people and partners.
- It creates an environment that excites and energises people and gives them the confidence to talk openly.
- It can result in new types of conversations with people as well as creating energy that draws them in.

Who would I use it with?

- Creative Engagement can be used with anyone - colleagues, partners and as a way of engaging residents.
- It’s a brilliant way of engaging people that wouldn’t normally be heard, i.e. wouldn’t speak up in a formal meeting environment, or with residents that wouldn’t normally attend formal engagement sessions.

How can it be used?

- Creative Engagement changes the way we approach engagement and involvement.
- From concept through to planning and delivery of interactions, it can develop skills and confidence in involving people in effective, engaging and fun ways.
- A Creative Engagement toolkit has been designed to share ideas. It’s been based on real examples of engagement.
- In recognition that there are times when in-person interactions aren’t possible, an adaptation has been suggested for some of the tools to be able to use them virtually.
- The toolkit includes:
 1. Hints and tips on having great interactions, in person and virtually
 2. Intro / warm up activities that can help people feel connected to your interaction or session, set a good tone and bring some energy. These are split into:
 - Activities to help learn a little bit about each other
 - Activities that can be applied to life/work
 - Activities that are just a bit of fun
 3. Creative engagement tools for when you don’t have much time with people
 4. Creative engagement tools for when you’ve got a bit more time with people
- A key part of Creative Engagement is about creating the environment for others to want to be involved and share.

Advice to others

- At first it may feel uncomfortable using techniques in formal settings, but it’s really effective and can produce really good ideas and conversations.
- Very little resource is needed, i.e. asking people to write on a window rather than post it notes is very empowering. Just make sure whiteboard markers are used!

Putting it into practice - how the tool has been used

Who was involved?

The department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and TaAF worked together to gain insight and involvement from DWP customers and employees, using a Creative Engagement approach. As an early 'test' of the approach, members of the TaAF team came to a health and wellbeing event held at Blackburn Jobcentre. Learning from this event gave us the confidence that further events could be held to involve DWP customers in the TaAF journey.

Why was this tool used?

Working with DWP we wanted to gain insight regarding physical activity levels and/or mental wellbeing from people using the service who were unemployed due to experiencing mental health challenges. To work with DWP in creating and testing a creative engagement approach with staff and customers which can lead to positive change:

- For DWP customers to have a chance to be engaged and involved in something that could have a positive impact on them
- To work collaboratively to create and test a creative engagement approach with staff and customers which could be replicated and adapted by DWP.

How was it done?

Initially, we agreed to design three different types of events to be tested over a period of time. Each could work as a standalone event whilst also working as a part of journey where a customer could experience them all. All of our design was based on the TaAF Creative Engagement approach which included some of the key elements outlined below:

- Agree what we want to achieve together

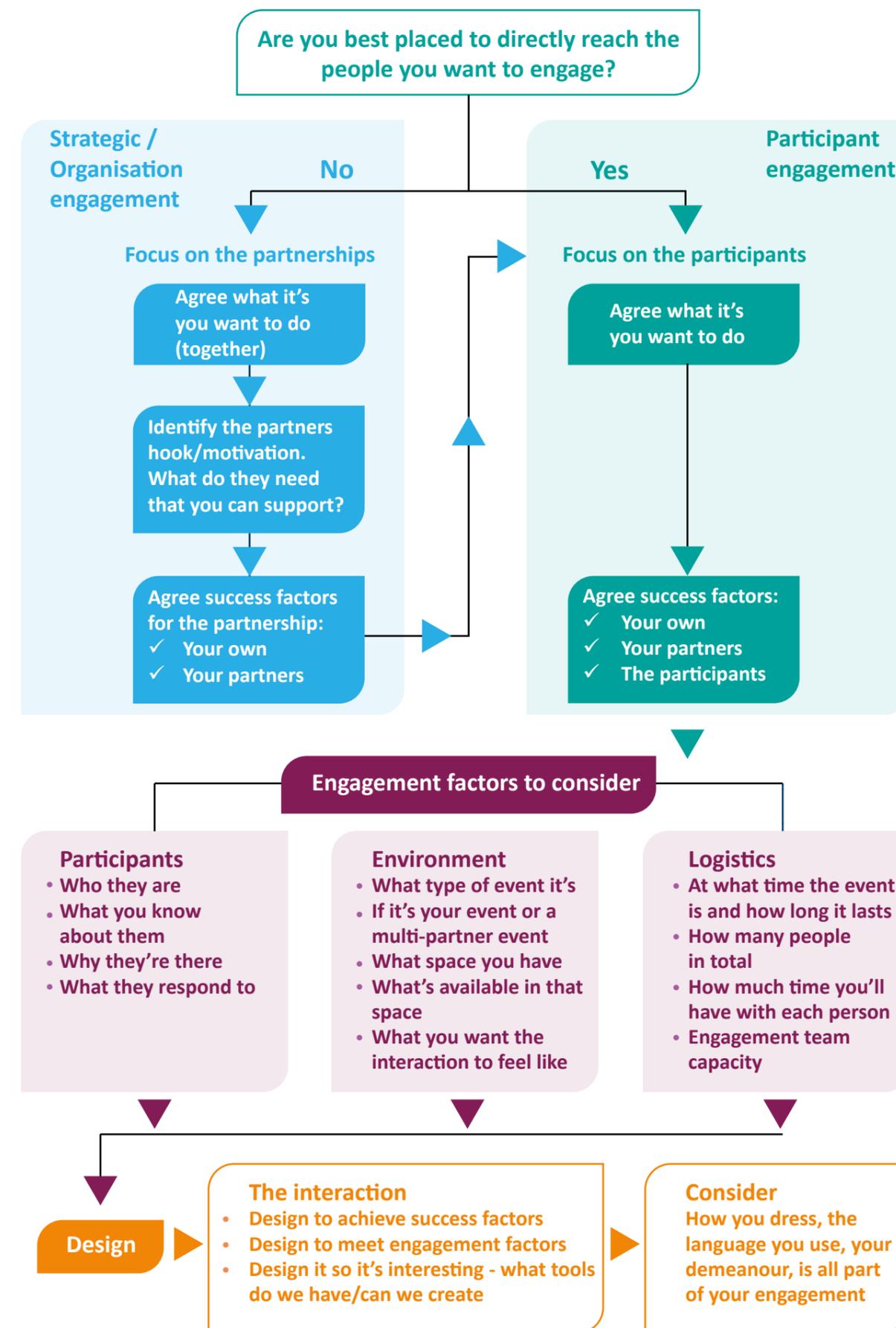
- Agree success factors for everyone
- Work out what this could support DWP with
- Think about the people, the environment and logistics
- Design the event factoring in everything that's known.

The approach developed seven different practical activities that help individuals to explore their experiences, motivations and opportunities to be physically active.

What was the impact?

Customers gave honest reflections about what more the Jobcentre could do to help improve their wellbeing and increase their engagement in physical activity. Many suggestions were based on changes that are within DWP control. We continue to work collaboratively with DWP to turn insight into ideas for change. This continues to involve both customers and staff who'll collectively deliver and create the change needed.

TaAF Creative Engagement Process



Creative Engagement Approach - Creating the right environment

Creating the right environment is an important part of the approach. Below are some of the practical steps that we took as part of the event.

Here are some of the things we did to try and create an environment where the customers could relax and open up.

Room

- Moved furniture to create lots of space
- Had music on quietly in the background (playing uplifting songs)
- Took down any DWP work-related posters
- Used TaAF banners to create a separate area for the event
- Opened all of the blinds to provide lots of light
- Had couches and chairs for people to rest on

People

- Everyone dressed informally, no lanyards, just written first-name badge
- The team were smiling, friendly and welcoming
- The delivery team didn't include work coaches to create a necessary separation
- Team roles included floor walkers to make sure customers were OK
- The team spoke in everyday language

Interactions

- ID code meant people could stay anonymous (if they wanted to)
- Each activity has number, name and instructions
- It was voluntary and people could leave whenever
- The whole event could be done in 20 minutes
- Very little writing and reading needed
- Activities were visual, a bit fun but simple

What did we learn?

We really should take the time to think about what people need to feel welcomed and part of something, and then design the environment and interaction to deliver that. When you get it right, people who are often resistant or hesitant will open up and share with you.

From the event

- Environment felt positive and relaxing
- Team awareness of activity instructions could be improved
- Current approach is staff intensive
- Better information provided to the Work Coaches would help customers

About customer needs

- Customers need people to motivate them and people to be active with
- Customers need advice, perhaps from a GP, on balancing health and being active
- Customers need activities to be low cost or free
- Customers need the Jobcentre to be a more welcoming environment.

Reflections from those involved:



This is more open and everyone's nice. You don't feel like you're being forced to give your views, it's just in a really nice, relaxed way. Especially for me because I've got depression and sometimes anxiety."

"Today has helped because I'm putting my opinion into the Job Centre [to change things], to make it more comfortable, basically."



DWP Customers

Summary of Opportunities:

The impact of Covid-19 did inevitably lead to a change in how TaAF could engage and involve people. However, as is the nature of Creative Engagement, it allowed us to think a little differently in what we could do to still reach people.

Below is an example, from the summer Covid-19 lockdown, that showcases how, even when faced with different challenges, you should still consider the specific audience and how you'd like them to feel, thinking about how you get across information in an interesting and easy to understand way.

DWP faced an unprecedented demand on their service. Teams were stretched and they were finding it hard to do some of their 'keep in touch' and well-being checks with customers. To help out, TaAF with DWP designed a simple video and accompanying text message that DWP shared with thousands of customers across Pennine Lancashire, through the Universal Credit journal system.

This was the first time DWP had used a video on YouTube to communicate with customers. Doing this highlighted a number of lessons that could be learnt from and acted on, which will help DWP in the future share messages and involve customers in a different way.

We intend to grow and develop our approach further, developing toolkits and running skills-development sessions for others to learn from and use.

Where can I find further information?

[TaAF Website](#)

[Download the Creative Engagement Toolkit](#)

[The event in action](#)

[Team Feedback](#)

[Team Feedback](#)

[Together an Active Future website](#)

Email: team@taaf.co.uk

SenseMaker®

Withernsea Local Delivery Pilot

SenseMaker is a tool that helps to capture individual experiences that people share in their contexts and then broadly visualise patterns across the narratives of wide and diverse populations. This tool is designed to bring together qualitative narratives and quantitative data to develop actionable insights needed for faster and better decision-making.



Name: SenseMaker (distributed ethnography)

Why would I use it?

- To be able to see the patterns between individual stories.
- To bring qualitative and quantitative data collection together within one tool.

Who would I use it with?

- Small groups for developmental sessions.
- Cross-population for broader patterns over time.
- Journaling by specific individuals over time whilst engaged in a programme, project or initiative.

How can it be used?

- It can be used to track the change in attitudes, behaviours, areas of interest, etc... by asking for people's micro-narratives.
- Respondents are recoding their own narratives through indicating where these sit on a series of triads and dyads. This removes a layer of potential bias/disconnection by external people theming and coding others' narratives.

Advice to others

- This is a complex piece of software to become proficient in using. Training materials and instruction on creating the different sets of questions aren't readily available from the creators of SenseMaker, although this is developing.
- Being clear on why using SenseMaker is advantageous is important – why aren't we using an ordinary survey?
- Working to explain and interpret data to partners and host organisations also requires some pre-work.

Putting it into practice – how the tool has been used

Who was involved?

There was already some pre-existing work using this tool in the Local Authority Public Health team which brought some background knowledge, experience and connection with the organisation who created it.

This allowed access to a choice of consultants who could work in a community development setting using this tool. Co-designing the questions and coding with the team and the community was important for this to be relevant to those involved on the ground.

Why was this tool used?

This tool provides a way to show the impacts and shifts at deeper levels in whole populations whilst also providing data that is meaningful to funders and partners. It also gives a less-biased approach to interpretation through people submitting and coding their own story. In time, it's hoped the community can interpret their own data so they can have a greater understanding of their own pursuits.

How was it done?

We asked residents to share their personal stories. Using tools developed by SenseMaker, residents could then place a marker against a series of tagged responses that would help to describe their experiences. The tool was then used to identify patterns that emerged between the different personal stories.

Initially, the tool was designed separately by the community and the Active Withernsea team. We quickly learned that both design and implementation needed to be collaborative, so we worked to design using the team and a few community members in the first instance. We had elicited many conversations with the community on activity and making the choices they wanted in their lives. The deep themes that became apparent are what we're using SenseMaker to track over time. Regardless of the content of the project or initiative, tracking these deep themes will reveal whether a deeper shift is happening for an estimation for true systems change – inside the culture of the community.

We used SenseMaker during the Covid-19 pandemic to explore how those staff working in community hubs had experienced their set-up. This provided insight particularly on leadership and approach. The findings showed how collective leadership was more important and effective than heavy top-down leadership. Everyone was focusing on the good of the community and the working together was the most important aspect of how the work was done.

What was the impact?

The information gathered about the community hubs was fed into the leadership teams managing the hubs, as well as to the broader organisation to bring learning on leadership styles and culture to their awareness. We fed the results back to the staff at the hubs through a series of illustrations as well as some of the data. Semi-structured interviews were also carried out as we approached the second lockdown to gather follow-up information to support the work using SenseMaker.

What did we learn?

- The whole process including design needs to be done collaboratively.
- Accessible language is very important.
- Having someone on hand to describe the process and help people work through the questions is advisable.

Where can I find further information?

[Why SenseMaker](#)

[Active Withernsea website](#)

Summary of opportunities:

Public Health in the East Riding are part-funding our evaluation coordinator in order that they'll bring the experience and data from Active Withernsea to the Public Health team to help explain and illustrate the purpose and value in using a tool like SenseMaker. Other Public Health projects are already being commissioned using SenseMaker and so the embedding of this as a way of viewing consultation and data is under way. This will support the evolution of data in the Local Authority as more areas become aware of the possibilities it affords in terms of insight and engagement.

Reflections from those involved:



The data that comes from SenseMaker is interesting and invites discussion and enquiry. The more perspectives on the data, the more ways of interpreting and applying them emerge, in line with complexity. The findings are very engaging, as the patterns can be seen alongside the personal narratives bringing richness and depth.



Also in this series:



Understanding value

**Common purpose/
shared value**

Distributed leadership

Capacity and time to reflect

Test and learn

Power shift

Having the right conversations

Understanding the system you're trying to shape

Sport England
21 Bloomsbury Street
London WC1B 3HF

[sportengland.org](https://www.sportengland.org)