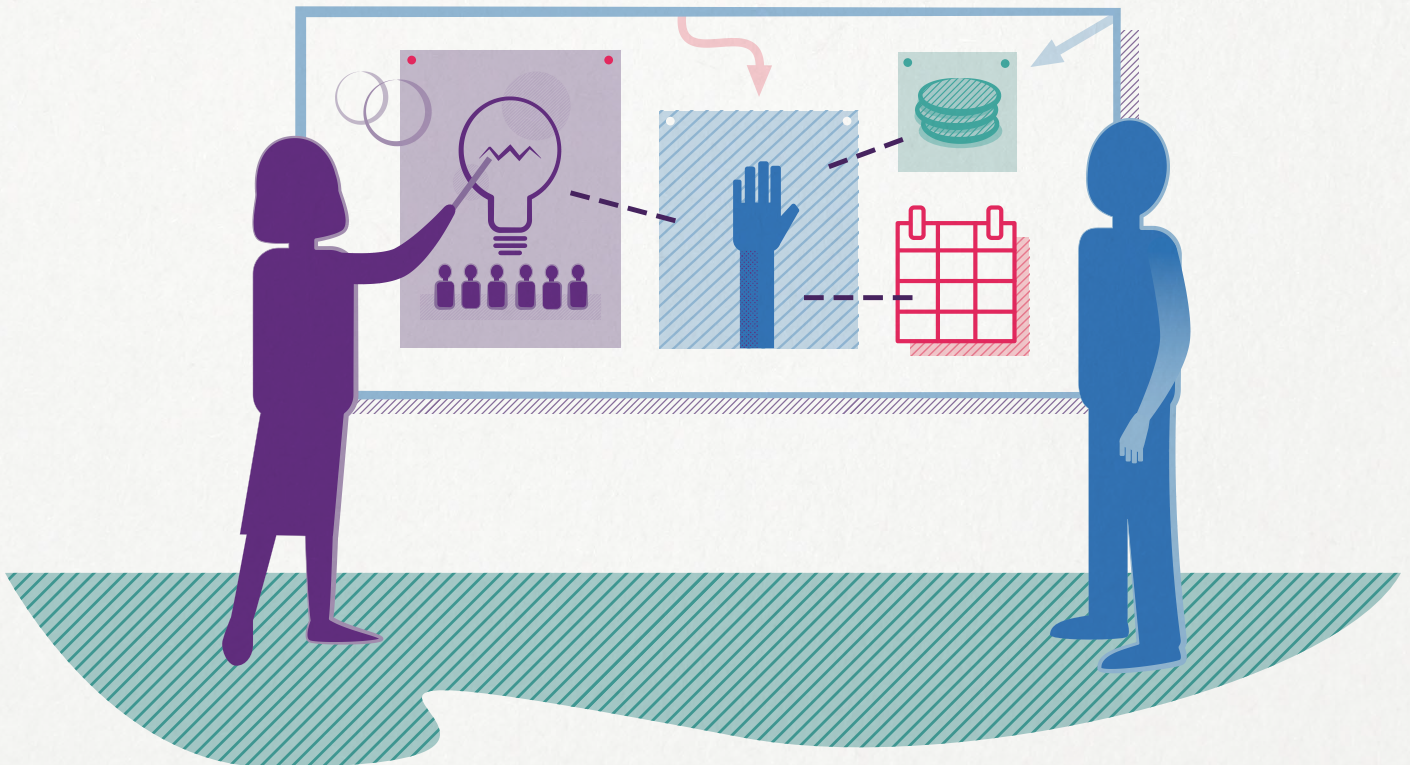


Health and Social Care Academy

# Ceding Power : Participatory Budgeting

May 2017



# Introduction

The Health and Social Care Academy's Five Provocations for the Future of Health and Social Care<sup>1</sup> recognise that achieving meaningful change in health and social care requires new and different ways of thinking.

One of the Five Provocations, Ceding Power, emphasises that engaging and enabling people from all walks of life to devise solutions and solve problems can create opportunities for transformational change. Participatory budgeting is a practical tool that can help make that happen.

## What is Participatory Budgeting?

Participatory budgeting (PB) is a way for people to have a direct say in how, and where, public funds are used to address local requirements. PB enables control over a local budget to be given to people by creating decision making processes which place value on the communities' view in a more proactive way than traditional budget setting arrangements.

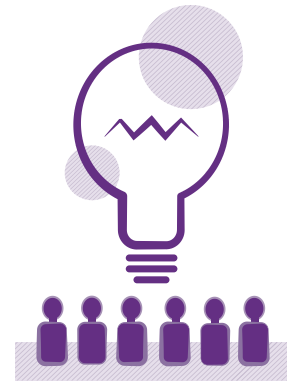
PB was first pioneered in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989, fuelled by a desire to increase social justice and reverse top-down decision making. By introducing a new funding model, it enabled citizens in each district to rank priorities for local spending in each locality, as well setting city wide priorities.

There are a number of different models of participatory budgeting, with some requiring more face to face involvement and others emphasising the importance of online engagement in decision making processes. Key to this is what the community is most comfortable with and creating the most accessible means possible for those who it intends to engage, support and co-produce solutions with.

<sup>1</sup> <http://academy.alliance-scotland.org.uk/publication-five-provocations-for-the-future-of-health-and-social-care>

# PB processes usually involve:

1 Brainstorming of ideas with a local community.



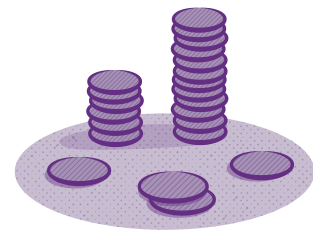
2 Development of those ideas into project plans or proposals.



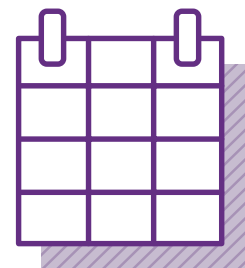
3 Community vote on different projects.



4 Projects are funded through, usually, small grants and begin their work.



5 Process repeated on an annual basis.



Some principles<sup>2</sup> underpinning most participatory budgeting processes include:

- Directly involving local people who will be affected by the decision, and capacity building where it is required.
- Empowering people to understand the complexities of setting budgets and choosing between priorities.
- Creating a level of transparency around the process and eventual financial spend.
- Accessibility and valuing of diverse backgrounds, opinions and experiences.
- Sharing responsibility between stakeholders.

Recent reviews of PB across the UK have, however, concluded that whilst there have been “concrete results” there has also been a “limited impact”<sup>3</sup>. This highlights the wide reaching social benefits which can be achieved through participatory budgeting, but the limitations of achieving transformational change without significant investment by Governments, local authorities and others.



<sup>2</sup> <https://pbnetwork.org.uk/values-principles-and-standards-for-participatory-budgeting/>

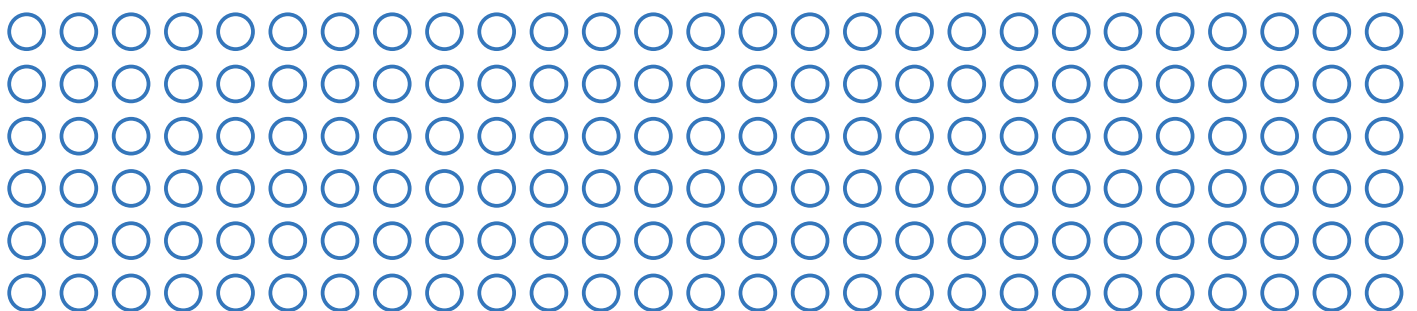
<sup>3</sup> Framing citizen participation: Participatory Budgeting in France, Germany and the United Kingdom. London: Palgrave, 2014

# Participatory budgeting in health and social care in Scotland

Participatory budgeting has been growing across the United Kingdom since 2000. In Scotland we have moved from “little more than a handful” of PB processes in 2010<sup>4</sup>, to at least 83 projects at the time of writing<sup>5</sup>. PB is now increasingly becoming part of the landscape through which decisions are made about health and social care in Scotland, and helpfully this shift has begun to develop as local strategic and locality planning has developed through the process of health and social care integration in communities across Scotland.

The use of PB in health and social care is likely to grow in coming years as local authorities begin to implement the Scottish Government’s 1% target for community choice projects as outlined in the SNP’s pre-2016 election manifesto<sup>6</sup>.

Some examples of how PB has been used in health and social care in recent years are detailed below for the purposes of illustration of the process and types of projects which can be supported by PB.



<sup>4</sup> What Works Scotland: Review of 1st Generation Participatory Budgeting in Scotland, 2016

<sup>5</sup> <https://pbscotland.scot/map/> (as at 13 March 2017)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.snp.org/manifesto\\_plain\\_text\\_extended](https://www.snp.org/manifesto_plain_text_extended)

### **North Ayrshire, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Your Money, You Decide (2017)<sup>7</sup>**

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (NAHSCP) with support from partners from NHS Public Health, the third and independent sectors, Community Planning and volunteers with lived experience designed and facilitated the Participatory Budgeting event, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Your Money, You Decide in Ardrossan on 25 February 2017. The event was jointly funded by the Scottish Government and NAHSCP, with a total sum of £50,000 available for projects to bid for a maximum of £1,250 each and a steering group co-produced all aspects of the event, which included developing a comprehensive communication and engagement plan.

82 applications were received asking for a total of £91,000. A small independent panel, consisting of community members sifted the initial applications and thereafter, 46 applications were given the opportunity to present at the event. With over 200 people in attendance, each project was allowed no more than 3 minutes to present and audience members voted using a digital voting system with instant feedback and results – which resulted in 41 projects being funded. The successful projects have been asked to provide feedback on their progress after 6 months to measure the impact and provide an opportunity for the projects to access support if required.

### **Aberdeenshire, Your Voice, Your Choice (2016)<sup>8</sup>**

Your Voice Your Choice is a project that involves local people from the North of Fraserburgh and Central Peterhead. Residents decide which projects will get part of £200,000 funding to help improve health and wellbeing in their area and will be involved in delivering these.

Local people, community groups and third sector organisations were able to apply for funding of between £200 and £10,000 to help support their projects. Over 70 applications were received related a wide variety of proposals including First Responders, Christmas lunches, walking groups and community activities.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.northayrshire.community/2016/12/09/mental-health-wellbeing-money-decide-treasure-chest-opportunities/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://aberdeenshire.participare.io/>

# What could make participatory budgeting transformational?

- Creating a “new normal” for funding arrangements which genuinely involves ceding decision making power from the state to communities.
- Transparent decision making processes.
- Placing value on informed communities.
- Supporting difficult conversations with communities.

# What could stop participatory budgeting being transformational?

- Lack of trust in communities to make “the right decision”.
- Limiting participatory budgeting to “project” funding and not mainstream budget decisions.
- Avoiding effective monitoring and evaluation, not only of the process, but the outcomes.
- Use of formulaic participatory budgeting processes, rather than being responsive to the characteristics of the local community.

# Ceding Power

Traditional approaches to budget decision making rely on consultative approaches rather than direct decision making by communities. In this sense, participatory budgeting offers a step change in that communities are not only coming up with the solutions to challenges, but also making funding decisions. This has the potential not just to create preventative, community-based measures, but also to rekindle participative democracy.

Participatory budgeting could lead to the empowerment and energising of communities and whilst its status has never been higher, further mainstreaming is required to make sure that it is not a fringe activity but something that truly enables, empowers and supports many communities across Scotland to take choices and control of their environment, their services and the support that helps to keep them well.

This should involve moving away from small-scale project funding to mainstream budgeting between undertaken on a participatory budgeting basis. As yet, this has not happened in health and social care in Scotland, but there are examples of larger scale budgets having adopted the principles of participatory budgeting.

## Western Isles, Uist and Barra Public Bus Redesign Project<sup>9</sup>

By using participatory budgeting methodology people in Uist and Barra had the opportunity to be fully involved in the design and procurement of local bus services. This included household questionnaires, engagement events, supplier engagement and capacity building, social media discussion and tender assessment panels made up only of community members.

This approach has enabled the community to effect change on a wholesale bus service, which had not previously been considered to meet their needs. An uptake in the use of services has been reported, the communities report a greater understanding of public procurement processes and suppliers have become more able to easily respond to public demand.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.innovationexchange.scot/wi-uist-and-barra-public-bus-redesign-project.html>



Whilst the Scottish Government's commitment to a 1% target for local authority budgets to be set by PB is welcome, there are legitimate questions to be asked on the scale and pace of change this will create. If we are truly serious about ceding power and trusting communities to be involved in decision making processes, courageous leadership is required to show the way by investing strongly in ensuring this happens. This investment should focus on:

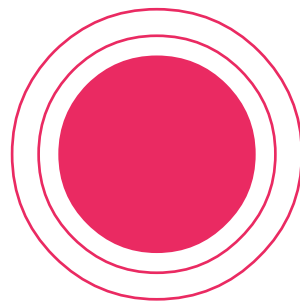
- Utilising participatory methods to make decisions over mainstream local authority budgets, rather than small tests of change
- Ensuring diversity of engagement across protected characteristics.
- Making expenses and care available to allow all members of the community to participate.
- Robust monitoring and evaluation exercises that seek to share learning.

This leadership should also be mindful of the need to focus attention on those who are often seldom heard by traditional, consultation exercises. The original Porto Alegre model was based on a notion of achieving social justice which, it has been argued, has been lost by many subsequent PB exercises. Representatives should be disproportionately drawn from lower income backgrounds, in order to redress the imbalance created by previous structural arrangements, and officers should seek out voices which are often unheard (e.g. people with learning disabilities, people with experience of homelessness, people from the BAME, LGBTBI communities and others).



The reality of commissioning process in Scotland is that many of the smaller projects funded through PB exercises to date will, if they are to be mainstreamed, require significant evaluation and monitoring processes to prove their worth to their local community. In Brazil, evaluations of the impacts have been able to document “improvements to services, infrastructure, governance and citizen participation directly as a result of PB processes have been instrumental in achieving reductions in social and health inequalities.”<sup>10 11 12</sup> Without a level of infrastructure and awareness around impact, not just of the PB process but funded projects, concerns will remain about the ability to mainstream projects in tight financial climate with more competition for smaller pots of money.

A tricky balance will also have to be drawn between mainstreaming of PB processes and principles and avoiding the need for “off the shelf” PB solutions. As has been indicated elsewhere<sup>13</sup>, part of the success of PB is when it is specifically modelled to the needs and views of the local community rather than as a standardised model. The temptation to create a model and follow it must be avoided to truly break through into transformational territory.



## For more on participatory budgeting why not visit:

- PB Scotland: <https://pbscotland.scot/>
- Scottish Government, Participatory Budgeting: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/engage/Participatory-budgeting>
- Health and Social Care Academy Podcast, 2016, Ceding Power – Participatory Budgeting: <http://academy.alliance-scotland.org.uk/podcast-ceding-power-participatory-budgeting>
- Your Voice, Your Vote: <https://aberdeenshire.participare.io/>

**10** What Works Scotland: Review of 1st Generation Participatory Budgeting in Scotland, 2016

**11** Sintomer Y, Herzberg C, Röcke A, Allegretti G. Transnational Models of Citizen Participation: The Case of Participatory Budgeting. *Journal of Public Deliberation* 2012; 8:2:Article 9

**12** Goncalves S. The effects of participatory budgeting on municipal expenditure and infant mortality in Brazil. *World Development* 2014;53:94-110.

**13** What Works Scotland: Review of 1st Generation Participatory Budgeting in Scotland, 2016



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