

Appendix B: Interview protocol and questionnaire

The interviews used a semi-structured approach to explore residents' experiences and perspectives of community life across Nottinghamshire. A standard question set was used to provide consistency across interviews, while allowing participants to discuss issues that were particularly relevant to their own experiences.

The question set was informed by the Heads, Hearts and Hands framework and Community Organising Principles. It explored:

- Heads – what people know, think and understand about their community.
- Hearts – how people feel about where they live and their sense of belonging.
- Hands – what people do, the actions they take, and opportunities and barriers to participating in community life.

Interviews were facilitated as open conversations rather than a fixed question-and-answer exercise. Interviewers used the questions as prompts and used follow-up questions where appropriate to explore participants' responses in greater depth.

Participants were encouraged to reflect on:

- what community means to them and what matters to them about where they live;
- what supports community life and helps people feel connected and included;
- challenges or barriers affecting community life and participation; and
- what they would like to see changed or improved.

Interviews were conducted with residents recruited through community-based colleagues and local partners. These partners supported the project to identify and connect with participants and, in several areas, to facilitate recordings.

The interviews were subsequently reviewed using a standardised review process to identify key themes and pertinent participant messages. An initial reviewer unfamiliar with the participants or case study details reviewed the interviews, followed by a second reviewer who checked that the observations were accurate and comprehensive. Themes were then derived and grouped by the report authors.

DPH Annual Report 25-26

Interview Question Guide

Interview Style Tips (for interviewer)

- Encourage storytelling: “Can you tell me more about that?”
- Use prompts like: “How did that make you feel?” or “Can you give an example?”
- Let pauses happen - people often add more depth
- Keep language simple and non-technical
- Aim for authenticity over perfection
- Smile, be curious and show an interest.
- Summarise answers and reflect back to show you’re listening and understanding. If you feel an answer is vague or you are unsure what they mean, try clarifying.
- Try to remain neutral and non-judgemental and be open to both positive and negative experiences.
- Express empathy for difficult experiences but avoid trying to fix or solve problems during the interviews.
- Pay attention to non-verbal cues (e.g. body language, quietness, facial expressions, tone of voice) as well as what they are saying.
- Follow the participant’s lead — don’t rush to your next question if they are still talking about something important.

Intro:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today.

We are talking to people from communities across Nottinghamshire to better understand what community life feels like for the people who live here — including the things that bring people together, the strengths within communities, and the challenges people may face. We want to learn from those who know and understand their communities best.

Whilst we cannot promise direct changes as a result of the interviews, we hope these conversations build understanding and awareness of the experiences and needs of communities across Nottinghamshire.

There are no right or wrong answers. We are really interested in learning about your own experiences, views, and stories, in whatever way feels comfortable for you to share them.

Some questions may touch on personal experiences or perspectives about where you live or the groups you are part of. If there are any questions you don’t want to answer, that’s completely fine. You can also pause or stop at any time.

These interviews will be edited into short clips which will be available publicly online. Please take your time and feel free to pause, rephrase, or start an answer again if you would like to.

Before we begin, are you happy to continue or do you have any questions?

Question Set

1. Opening

(Keep tone warm and informal to help people relax.)

Questions could be general/conversational to warm people to being in-front of the camera e.g.:

- “how’re you today?”
- “What area do you live in?”

2. Warm-Up Questions

- How long have you lived in your community/been part of your group?”
- How would you describe your community in a few words?
- What does ‘community’ mean to you personally?

3. Place-Based Community Questions

- “What do you like most about where you live?”
- “What makes your area special or unique?”

4. Community of Interest / Group Questions

- *(Tailor depending on the group, e.g. for immigrant communities – “How have you found settling into the community here?”)*

Engagement & belonging

- “Can you tell us about the group/community you’re part of
- What do you enjoy most about being involved?”
- “What drew you to this group?”
- “How does being part of this group make you feel?”
- “What would help people feel more connected where you live?”

Impact

- “How has this community or group supported you
- Why do you think groups like this are important?”

Challenges / frustrations

- “Are there things in your community that frustrate or concern you?”
- “Do you feel people in your community are well supported? Why or why not?”

Change and ideas

- “What does a strong, healthy community look like to you?”
- “If you could change one thing about your community, what would it be?”

5. Closing Question

Before we finish, is there anything else you would like to add, or anything we haven’t asked that feels important to you?

Thank you for sharing your experiences and taking the time to speak with us today. We really appreciate your openness and the perspectives you’ve offered. We hope the report will be ready by (DATE), and will be sure to send you this over as soon as it’s ready.