

NORTH OF TYNE VOLUNTEERING AREA OF EXCELLENCE

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: STRUCTURED CONVERSATIONS AND ACTIVE LISTENING

INTRODUCTION

Structured conversations and active listening are essential techniques for effective communication in personal, educational, and professional contexts. These approaches emphasise understanding, empathy, and collaboration. Staff, volunteers and community activists can use these quick tips to get the most out of their interactions with communities and with each other!

STRUCTURED CONVERSATION

A structured conversation is organised into stages to ensure clarity and progress:

- **Explore:** Open with questions to identify needs and aspirations, ensuring open body language and non-verbal cues.
- **Focus:** Summarise key points to prioritise issues.
- **Plan:** Set clear, achievable goals and outline actionable steps.
- **Review:** Reflect on outcomes and future steps

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening enhances communication by ensuring the speaker feels understood. Key elements include:

- **Maintaining Eye Contact:** Shows attentiveness while avoiding an intimidating gaze.
- **Using Open Body Language:** Uncrossed arms, leaning forward slightly, and occasional nods encourage openness.
- **Avoiding Interruptions:** Allow pauses without jumping in, enabling the speaker to complete their thoughts.
- **Reflecting and Paraphrasing:** Restate what has been said to confirm understanding.
- **Paying Attention to Non-Verbal Cues:** Notice tone, gestures, and facial expressions

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