



Civic University
Network



**Institute for
Community Studies**

Case Study:

Priority-Setting in Partnership Method

Institute for Community Studies

The **Priority Setting in Partnership (PSP)** method enables communities to identify the most important **issues** and **burning questions** they have about their local area. The method uses a **deliberative approach** to generating knowledge and uncovering insight from the lived experience of communities. A **variety of tools** can be used to gather information and a step-by-step approach is used to allowing understanding to build over time. The method is a means of **identifying priorities** for further action.

The PSP method facilitates a process of **collective sense-making** about what matters most to communities. It employs methods designed to crowd in, co-identify, and explore issues and concerns collectively. It builds **collective priorities** with people working as a community, not as individuals, to identify which issues need urgent or priority attention, bridging between different viewpoints and negotiating commonalities, differences and conflicts to reach shared priorities.

PSP Method in Practice

The PSP method was initially trialled in a national project designed to create a research agenda based upon the experiences and interests of different communities across the UK. The process started by asking people to submit questions and concerns related to their specific community through a demographically representative online survey. Researchers turned thousands of these submissions into themes and issues and worked with communities to collectively prioritise these. The method was able to accommodate a diversity of viewpoints and experience, as well as identify common interests, thus helping to forge pathways towards addressing the things that matter most to ordinary people and developing the collective voice of communities.

Summary

Role of Community	Community engaged as contributors to knowledge production and setting priorities collectively.
Depth of Collaboration	Medium-High- research process facilitated by professionals but with a high degree of involvement of community members in contributing knowledge and insight. If used in the context of particular location, the PSP method could have greater levels of local community ownership of the process.
Lens	Participation and involvement- method sought to identify priorities and focus <i>through</i> engagement.
Inclusivity	Participants targeted to reflect demographic characteristics of UK, resulting in a more inclusive approach to engagement as opposed to targeting specific groups or organisations. Participants recruited through sampling, rather than via membership of organisations means that a greater variety of viewpoints and experiences is likely to be included.
Data Generated	Questions, concerns, sentiments and priorities.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open-ended & explorative approach to inquiry = open to wide range of topics, ideas, areas of focus rather than being prescriptive• Helps to form consensus around paths of action• Negotiates diverse viewpoints in any given community• Can build relationships and mutual trust/understanding through process of collective prioritising
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open-ended nature can throw up a lot of ideas and contributions- requires ability to manage and navigate this in productive ways• Works with community members as individuals rather than members of organisations = may be hard to follow through with action