

What is Community Empowerment?

To empower someone means giving a person the power to do something, to make someone feel stronger and more confident.

Empowerment helps us to feel more in control, giving us confidence and the freedom to make our own decisions.



Community empowerment is about working with others in ways to empower them, treating everyone as equal and without judgement.

For the Harris, working with others means working with the community of Preston.



This way of working helps everyone feel included and more confident that they are helping to improve services for themselves. This then helps to make those services more inclusive and relevant for everyone's benefit, so nobody is or feels excluded.



Why we think community empowerment is important to the Harris?

Our founder Edmund Harris' wanted to develop services to make people's lives richer through heritage and the arts.



In our everyday work we want to ensure that our local community is at the centre of everything that we do. We want to be genuine and real in representing the diversity that is within Preston.



We don't want to keep making decisions that affect others just because we think we know best. We want to listen to our community and we want them to be able to talk openly with us. We want to know what people think about the work we do at the Harris, whether you already use the services there or whether you don't. We want to know the why people don't get involved with us and try and remove some of these barriers together.



We have received lots of feedback over the years from local people who say that the Harris doesn't represent them - that it only represents a small section of people. They don't see how it could benefit them. Working in a way that includes everyone will ensure that the Harris reflects the community it is part of. It is time for change.



Our aim is for community empowerment to become part of everything we do, and that it becomes part of our normal way of working.

When were the guidelines created?

Guidelines were created during COVID lockdown 2020. The current guidelines are the 4th version. They are being used for the first time now in 2022 and will be looked at annually by the community to make sure they are kept up to date.

How were the Harris Community Empowerment guidelines created and who by?

The Guidelines were originally created using up to date research and best practice from within a sector called public engagement. Public Engagement is a way of bringing citizens, community organisations, businesses, and government together to solve problems that affect people's lives. The guidelines were then developed in consultation with lots of people we work with in Preston who have experience of working with the community.

These included:

- Preston City Council Community Engagement Team

- Preston City Council's Inclusion Reference Group
- Millbank Wellbeing Centre
- Community Gateway Association
- Blaze Arts
- Widening Participation and Public Engagement Team at UCLAN
- Disability Equality North West
- Deafway



Who will use the guidelines?

The guidelines will be used by all staff at the Harris. We will also ask our volunteers and freelance staff to work with the guidelines and will be champions for the guidelines with external staff and partners.

How are the guidelines going to be used?

The guidelines will be used in all our projects. Project leaders will make sure this happens. All Harris job descriptions will include community empowerment. We want to challenge ourselves in the way that we work and we would like to be more accountable to our community.

