

A photograph of three women and a young child. The woman in the center wears a dark blue hijab and a light grey blazer. To her left, a woman wears a light pink hijab. To her right, a woman wears a dark grey hijab and holds a young child in a green long-sleeved shirt. The child has a circular sticker on their chest. The background is slightly blurred.

citizens^{uk}

CITIZENS UK MANUAL FOR ORGANISING A CITIZENS' COMMISSION



Mental Health: Wellbeing and Public Life in the North East

With thanks to Tyne and Wear Citizens; and Revd Dr Simon D Mason, Coordinator of the Citizens Commission on Mental Health: Wellbeing and Public Life in the North East; for producing this manual.

Preface

What is a Citizens UK Commission, and what does it do?

A Citizens UK Commission is a three-way public conversation between leaders of Citizens UK member institutions, those in positions of public power, and members of the public. All of whom share a keen interest in finding solutions to the problems which arise out of a Citizens UK Listening Campaign. Members of the Commission are called 'Commissioners'.

Commissions have a significant history in UK society and politics. Usually, Commissioners are political appointees who invite members of the public to consult on issues. Thus, whilst Commissions are a potential mechanism for social change, a political agenda and imbalance of power is built into how they are structured. They often list recommendations which, unless in the Government's interest, get swept under the carpet. This kind of Commission maintains the world as it is, rather than building towards the world as it should be.

In Citizens UK we use the democratic vehicle of a Commission and public hearings to lever citizen power into the process of finding solutions to social problems. Commissioners are drawn from the leadership of Citizens UK member institutions and, in turn, public figures or power holders are invited to partake by Citizens UK leaders. A Citizens UK Commission seeks to challenge the status quo because it is about acting together for the common good and making real, lasting change.

A Commission is a particular kind of tool in community organising. Whilst similar roles and skills are needed to organise an Assembly, Leadership Group or Action, Commissions have distinct Leadership roles and complexities.

Why produce an online manual?

The way we develop as Leaders in community organising is relational; we learn by doing with others - like an apprentice. Traditionally, we have not written things down lest they become set in stone: 'that is the way we have always done it'.

When Tyne & Wear Citizens embarked on its Commission on Mental Health there were few resources to help us organise a Commission from beginning to end. We learned from Nottingham Citizens' example of creating a Commission to explore hate crime, and also gleaned useful learning from the Citizens UK Islamic Commission. We believe there are practical resources from the Citizens UK Commissions that can be shared, such as Terms of Reference, Job Descriptions, GDPR data protection forms, and templates of letters. So, we have produced this written resource for Citizens UK Chapters who want to use the vehicle of a Commission to win change at a local, regional, and national level.

The manual is structured by key moments of 'Research, Action and Evaluation'. We have used the community organising tool of 'Reaction, Action, Evaluation' for the power analysis of each leadership role.

Introduction

First, I want to say how deeply proud I am of what we achieved and my part in the commission as the coordinator. We achieved all that we did in such a short space of time, with limited resources and really nothing, except people power.

As the coordinator the key thing I learned was the difference between leading and organising. As a leader coordinating a commission, I took on too many tasks because I did not know what a commission entailed. This manual is a solution to that problem, so that other leaders and organisers can benefit from my learning. However, the best solution is to be an organiser who develops more and stronger leaders. When I did this as the coordinator, I was more effective. If I were to coordinate another large-scale campaign that is where I would start - having more trained leaders.

The alliance developed its power through training leaders and growing its membership. ReCoCo, a mental health charity, joined the alliance during the commission. Two other institutions subsequently joined. By undertaking the commission, we became larger, more diverse and more powerful as an alliance.

We also developed our relationship with power. Alongside a listening campaign, having a public commission was itself an action, because it led to leaders from Tyne & Wear Citizens sitting at the same table as key public figures. Michael Thompson put it well when he said "the public leaders who were commissioners were compelled to act in a way they would not have done if they had just read the report."

The numbers of leaders trained and the depth of their commitment proved crucial to our success. The example of the action in Durham on the suicidality of students is a good lesson. We see here that if institutions are not engaged; if you do not have enough members, trained leaders, or relationships with power, then you will struggle to win. But as an alliance we learn in action. I might say, we learn more from the actions we do not win! However, as Helena Medley makes clear: "we want to win, and this points up the importance of leadership training. You need trained leaders to win actions."

Revd Dr Simon D Mason

Coordinator - Citizens Commission on Mental Health: Wellbeing and Public life in the North East.



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Background to the Commission - Tyne & Wear Citizens

In 2017 Tyne & Wear Citizens embarked on a Listening Campaign in preparation for its Launch Assembly. At each Issues Workshop mental health was an issue. Not surprising, given that Royals and celebrities were speaking out about mental health. For Leaders in our member institutions mental health was a daily struggle.

At the Delegates Assembly, there were two presenting issues: waiting lists for treatment and a 'postcode lottery' for medication. Testimony was shared by Secondary school students on time spent waiting for a GP referral to a specialist unit and talking therapies.

By the Delegates Assembly we had Leaders ready to give public testimony. Their Testimony swung the whole alliance behind mental health as the number one action to organise around. A powerful endorsement. Yet, there was a strong feeling we had not drilled down far enough to identify the real issues underlying these presenting mental health issues.

In other words, we had not identified a winnable action that would have an impact on Tyne & Wear. Crucially, we had not done a full power analysis.

Citizens Commission on Mental Health

Citizens UK has a track record of using Commissions as an organising tool. Nottingham Citizens had used it on their Hate Crime Commission, and there had been a Citizens UK Commission on Islam.

Using a Commission as a tool for organising might seem passive and laborious. Yet, a Public Hearing is a form of Citizens Assembly; Testimony is used to exert power on the Commissioners to shape their decisions. A Public Hearing is Action.

Power is also exercised dynamically within the Team of Commissioners. By those Commissioners who are community organising Leaders working together to challenge the public Commissioners - MP, NHS Chief Executive, Bishop.

A Commission is also a way of conducting Research whereby Commissioners, the public and stakeholders enter a live public conversation around a set of themed testimonies. Thus, a Citizens Commission is Research, as understood in the community organising model of change because it builds power through relationships.

Timeline of the Commission

January	<p>Mental Health Action Team organised [meets monthly until December]</p> <p>Coordinator appointed</p> <p>Chair of Mental Health Action appointed</p> <p>Secretary to Mental Health Action Team appointed</p> <p>Recruitment of Commissioners</p> <p>Chair of Commission appointed</p> <p>Commission Photographer appointed</p>
February	<p>Commission Timetable produced</p> <p>Commission Budget agreed</p> <p>Terms of Reference agreed</p> <p>Secretary to Commission appointed</p> <p>Listening Campaign starts</p> <p>Turnout Captain appointed</p> <p>Recruitment of Commissioners continues</p> <p>Explore Public Hearing venues</p>
March	<p>Listening Campaign continues</p> <p>Recruitment of Commissioners finalised</p> <p>Media Officer appointed</p> <p>GDPR Forms produced: Students, Adults</p>
April	<p>Listening Campaign ends</p> <p>Listening Campaign sub-group meets</p>
May	<p>Recording of Testimony</p> <p>1st Public Hearing</p> <p>Editor of Living Well report appointed</p>
June	<p>2nd and 3rd (Final) Public Hearings</p> <p>Public Health Researcher appointed</p>
July	<p>Two Issues Workshops</p> <p>Draft List of Asks</p> <p>Campaign Team Leaders appointed</p> <p>VIP List for Mental Health Assembly drafted</p>
August	<p>Sub-Group meets to finalise Asks</p>
September	<p>Action teams formed</p>

October	Action Teams continue
November	Living Well report published - Mental Health Assembly
December	Mental Health Action Team evaluates Commission and disorganises

Research

1.0 Mental Health Action Team

- The Mental Health Action Team consisted of 120 Leaders from member institutions across the alliance.
- All the Leaders who were Commissioners, Commission Officers, and Campaign Team Leaders came from the Mental Health Action Team.
- After the formation phase 30-50 Leaders, on average, attended each monthly meeting.
- After the Mental Health Assembly and Evaluation, the Mental Health Action Team disbanded, in line with Citizens UK practice.

1.1 Chair of the Mental Health Action Team

Reaction

- We needed a leader who could Chair the Mental Health Action Team, which was the core team of the entire Commission.
- A leader who was relational and committed to the development of leaders

Action

- The Coordinator and Community Organiser agreed the leader who had been appointed Chair of the Commission, and who had demonstrable public Leadership skills, should also Chair the Mental Health Action Team.

Evaluation

- The first Chair of the Mental Health Action Team was relational, energetic, and forward thinking.

- However, we also needed a Chair who could attend to administrative detail and work collaboratively with the Secretary to arrange the monthly meetings, sign off on Minutes and produce an Agenda. Such attention to detail improves the effectiveness of an action team.
- After the Public Hearings and the Commissioners disbanded, we reorganised the Mental Health Action Team and appointed a different Leader as its Chair.
- This second Chair had a greater capacity to work collaboratively with the Secretary.

Helena Medley, Chair of the Mental Health Action Team

What did you learn about your Leadership through this role?

I discovered that in this leadership role planning and communicating clearly were vital to increasing the breadth and depth of contributions from different institutions (represented by individuals) within the team. I learnt that the aim for us as a team to hear both broadly and deeply, motivated and energised me as a leader because of the potential for building power and winning change. I learnt that I loved to see leaders growing and institutions really learning from each other and that I needed regular reminders to prioritise working in a relational way and not be tempted to neglect this in favour of 'getting business done'! Looking back, I reflect that I handled conversations about accountability better than I thought I did at the time. I learnt that communicating something was always better than communicating nothing e.g., if I had only partial information it was usually better to give this and acknowledge the gaps.

What did you learn about community organising through this role?

It's been my experience and my observation that it's a way for communities to win change which is in their interest. I have found that its methodology promotes learning and growth and that what can sometimes seem quite a formal and structured process makes the difference in the handling and taking of power. When interests are strong and lives are at stake it is easy to move into confrontation and to divide and defend. Community organising challenges this tendency by bringing individuals, groups, and institutions together and holding on to the priority of winning change.

The discipline of 121 conversations and listening made all the difference to learning and building power as a group of institutions and it continued to be valuable right through the life course of the action team. If anything, I feel we didn't make use of it enough. As I watched the team change and develop, experiencing both wins and some frustrations (where we learnt we didn't yet have enough power to win the change we wanted to see), 121s helped us work to our strengths and motivations by being aware of each others' self-interest.

1.2 Secretary to the Mental Health Action Team

Reaction

- Proven administration skills: Agenda, Minutes, Mailing List
- Demonstrable commitment to community organising methods
- Time available to commit to this administration task each month

Action

- We appointed a leader who had proven administrative skills evidenced through his employment
- This leader had undergone 6-day training and was versed in the principles of community organising
- This leader represented a founding member of the alliance

Evaluation

- We appointed the same Leader as the Secretary of the Mental Health Action Team and Secretary to the Commission because they had the skills and self-interest to commit to these roles.
- However, as already noted, there was not seamless collaboration between the Chair and the Secretary of the Mental Health Action Team.
- After the Public Hearings we appointed a different Leader as the Secretary of the Mental Health Action Team.
- The new Chair and Secretary worked better together.

Andrew Cole, Secretary to the Mental Health Action Team

What did you learn about your Leadership through this role?

I learned I could keep going with the Action Team despite numerous difficulties and setbacks. I could support other leaders in their actions. I was good at working in a team and using minutes and agendas to keep it on track.

What did you learn about community organising through this role?

This was like an “apprenticeship” in running an action team: I saw how experienced leaders planned and facilitated meetings, dealt with unexpected setbacks or opportunities, and mentored new leaders. I learned that an action is unlikely to succeed if there is insufficient anger or personal passion for it in a team. I learned about the importance of developing relationships with, and hearing directly from, leaders and those with power when developing an action.

2.0 Mental Health Listening Campaign

- This Listening Campaign aimed to drill down further on the issues of mental health raised in the earlier, alliance-wide Listening Campaign.
- Over four months and incorporating 14 alliance members this Listening Campaign consisted of over half the membership of Tyne & Wear Citizens.

2.1 Turnout Captain***Reaction***

We wanted a leader with the relational and administrative skills to hold each institution in the Mental Health Action Team to account for their pledged testimonies, and turnout at the Public Hearings and Mental Health Assembly.

Action

The Mental Health Action Team appointed a leader who:

- Had undergone Leadership training
- Had the capacity to maintain 121 relationships with local turnout captains
- Could undertake training with leaders of institutions on how to meet pledges.

Evaluation

- The Leader appointed met all the key criteria.
- 500 Testimonies pledged, and 336 completed.
- Some institutions had under pledged. Others lacked Leaders to deliver on their pledge. The role of the Turnout Captain is to work with the local Turnout Captain to encourage other Leaders in their institution to meet their pledge. When this kind of support was given to a struggling institution, they did meet their significant pledge.
- 200+ alliance Leaders and members of the public attended the 3 Public Hearings.
- The Coordinator then appointed the Turnout Captain as Chair of the Mental Health Action Team and a Campaign Team Leader. It was a mistake.
- 450 people at the Assembly was the largest turnout ever in Citizens UK for a single action assembly. However, the pledge had been 600.
- What seemed a significant pledge was in practice, 'soft turnout'. A significant proportion was members of the public, rather than institution Leaders. Having taken on three jobs the Turnout Captain did not have the time necessary to work with Leaders to turnout their members to the Assembly and grow public power.

Helena Medley, Mental Health Action Team Turnout Captain

What did you learn about your Leadership through this role?

(Maybe that I should have said no to something!) Upon reflection, I think that perhaps my hope and commitment to winning change needed to be counterbalanced with a stronger relational commitment to developing/apprenticing leaders in my community.

There were times when I could have made better use of co-leaders within the alliance to address barriers I was encountering and to call organisations to account (e.g., with turnout) when I didn't have the power to do this myself.

What did you learn about community organising through this role?

Sometimes I think community organising can be a difficult thing to explain to people who have never come across it before - I have found it so. The discipline and structure of the methodology can at times feel quite heavy handed and I think we

sometimes need to interpret this within our communities and know which bits are essential and which bits we can use more flexibly.

Attending a Citizens Assembly or hearing testimony sometimes provided a way in for people who'd not previously experienced this kind of civic political expression. However, I found that making the links between local and personal community interests and feeling ready/able to join in required chatting, mentorship, tailored opportunity to try it out, no strings attached, chance to watch community organising in action.

Community organising takes time, often requires attention to detail and commitment to relationships. Sometimes the expectations of the process upon leaders have become a barrier and it can be very gradual work developing leaders in their ability and confidence to organise and their belief that they can win. Belief in the ability to win is crucial for motivation and I think we have more learning to do about how we communicate about this. Hearing stories from wins in other parts of the country and other contexts was important for me.

2.2 Testimony

Testimony is power. When an individual bears witness to their self-interest their power to act grows. As that commitment to action grows, so does their capacity for leadership. This grows the power of that member institution and the alliance.

Reaction

Although mental health had topped the poll for alliance-wide campaigns, Tyne & Wear Citizens wanted to drill down beyond the presenting mental health problems to uncover the issues and solutions relevant to the members of Tyne & Wear Citizens.

Action

- Each member institution of the Mental Health Action Team pledged to gather testimony from leaders in their institution and from their service users.
- Each institution appointed a local Turnout Captain to be accountable for this pledge and collaborate with the Mental Health Action Team Turnout Captain.
- A standard [Testimony Form](#) was produced to explore positive mental health experiences, problems, and proposed solutions.

- All were asked if they would allow their testimony to be used, even if that meant doing so anonymously
- When obtaining testimony from students we produced additional resources based on the new data protection regulations - GDPR (see [GDPR Student Form](#), [GDPR Adult Form](#))

Evaluation

- 550 testimonies were pledged by 14 member institutions.
- 336 testimonies were submitted, two-thirds of the pledge.
- Seven institutions met their pledge and four exceeded their commitment.
- Two institutions together pledged 320 testimonies: a mental health service users' organisation; and a carers' organisation for those with substance misuse.
- Because of underdeveloped leadership development in one of these institutions, they only submitted one-quarter of their pledge.

2.3 Testimony: Issues

- There were a significant number of substantial written submissions, and many brief responses.
- A small group of leaders met to read every testimony and agree on the nine themes for the Public Hearings. (See the Report, [Living Well](#))
- 27 of the testimonies were chosen to illustrate the 9 themes.
- Those individuals, whose testimony had been chosen were then invited to speak in person at a Hearing, or have their testimony recorded or read out.

Below is the process by which we divided responsibility for leading on the 17 actions into themed campaign teams and affiliated core teams:

After the Public Hearings there were two 'issues workshops' where 50 actions were long-listed by the whole Mental Health Action Team

Then a sub-group, formed of Tyne & Wear Citizens Commissioners, met to discuss the 50 Actions proposed. It was agreed that 17 were winnable and would have impact.

3 campaign teams were established around key sectors - NHS, Statutory Services and Civil Society. The 17 actions were grouped according to these sectors.

Each campaign team had a named Campaign Team Leader who worked with the Coordinator

Each campaign team was responsible for several actions with named leaders for each

Each of the 17 actions had a named leader who was responsible for forming a core team of leaders - recruited from a local member institution or joined through self-interest

Andrew Cole, Campaign Team Leader

What did you learn about your leadership through this process?

These were very early days in my Community Organising experience. I did learn about the importance of listening to and respecting opinions that weren't comfortable for me to hear.

What did you learn about community organising through this process?

I learned about identifying winnable actions which had sufficient numbers of enthused leaders to take them forward, a clear identifiable goal and a potential means of influencing the key decision makers. I learned that it was worth persevering, even though at first it seemed we would never be able to find winnable actions among all the testimonies and ideas which arose from them.

Action

3.0 Citizens Commission Officers

Introduction

- Tyne & Wear Citizens appointed leaders to the key roles of Chair of the Commission, the Secretary and Coordinator.
- After consultation with the Community Organisers, the Coordinator invited the leaders identified to be the Chair, and the Secretary.

3.1 Chair of the Commission

Reaction

- Wanted a leader from Tyne & Wear Citizens to Chair the Commission.
- A leader who had a good grasp of the mental health issues in the North East;
- Who had the mental and relational capacity to Chair Public Hearings.

Action

The Chair of the Commission:

- Was a leader of an institution in Tyne & Wear Citizens.
- Knew local mental health issues in the North East.
- Was trained in and committed to community organising.
- Had a record of speaking to large audiences of stakeholders.
- Related well with people in positions of power.
- Had time to prepare to Chair each Public Hearing.
- Could conduct media interviews for the Commission.

Evaluation

- The Chair of the Commission led a mental health carers charity.
- This charity was a founding member of Tyne & Wear Citizens.
- This leader had done 2-day training and later completed 6-day training.
- They met every deadline: preparation for the Public Hearings; collaborating with the Coordinator; writing the Foreword for the Report

3.2 Secretary to the Commission

Reaction

- Demonstrable commitment to community organising.
- Able to work independently.
- Ability to produce audio files of the testimonies for the Public Hearings.
- Capacity to produce cogent summary notes at each Public Hearing.
- Ability to liaise with sound engineers.

Action

- A leader from a member institution who had done 6-day national training.
- Proven administrative skills demonstrated through their employment.
- Good enough Word processing skills.
- Availability to attend the three Public Hearings.

Evaluation

- Recorded every live Public Hearing testimony.
- Presented the pre-recorded testimony.
- Liaised with sound engineers.
- Produced notes of the proceedings of the Public Hearings.
- We appointed the Secretary to the Commission as the Editor of the Report.

Joe Barton, Secretary to the Commission

What did you learn about your leadership through this process?

A Citizens Commission is a considerable undertaking from an administrative point of view, and, in this respect, a Secretary is crucial to its effective running. The function of the Secretary role, however, need not be limited to the administrative sphere.

As a trained leader, I was able to use the Commission Secretary role to develop the power of Tyne & Wear Citizens in the public realm. At all three of our Public Hearings, I took written notes and made audio recordings of the discussions that took place between our Commissioners, leaders and audiences. My presence was thus an indication to all in attendance –including those in key decision-making positions– that we as a chapter were serious about the discussions taking place and the contributions and commitments being made.

The breadth and depth of the Commission created many opportunities for leaders, myself included, to step up and find their voice. For many, these opportunities were provided by the Public Hearing stage, at which individuals gave testimony and engaged in discussions with the Commissioners. For me, this opportunity was provided by the Assembly, at which as Secretary, I launched Living Well, the report of the Commission. Here, I was able to speak up on behalf of others to a large audience and articulate the purpose and findings of our campaign.

What did you learn about community organising through this process?

My involvement in the Commission reinforced for me the essential role played by 121 conversations in sustaining effective action. When our energies were absorbed by the many procedural tasks of the Commission, we held fewer 121s with one another, and

thus thought and acted less relationally and strategically. Conversely, and as other leaders have explained elsewhere in this manual, when we made time to keep up 121s, our organising discipline was better maintained, and we were more likely to organise to win.

3.3 Coordinator

Reaction

- Experienced Citizens UK leader
- Experience of producing community organising assemblies or public events
- Demonstrable Leadership development skills
- Professional or personal experience of mental health issues
- Good administrative skills
- Good communication skills

Action

- Experienced leader in community organising
- Had undergone 6-day Citizens UK national training
- Had knowledge and experience of mental health issues
- Had participated as a leader in community organising assemblies and actions
- Had experience of producing large scale public events
- Worked as an NHS Mental Health Chaplain

Evaluation

- Produced Terms of Reference for the Commission in collaboration with a Community Organiser. Ratified by the Mental Health Action Team.
- After consultation with the Community Organiser the Chair and Secretary of the Mental Health Action Team were appointed. This was ratified by the whole Mental Health Action Team.
- After consultation with the Community Organiser, appointed Commissioners
- Managed the Commission's budget, after negotiation with the Community Organiser who secured the funding.
- Dates for the three Public Hearings were negotiated with the three public Commissioners

- Appointed Commission Report Team: Editor, Researcher, Co-authors, Producer/ Designer, Public Hearing Photographer. This decision was ratified by the Mental Health Action Team.
- Liaised in production of report with Editor and Producer
- Recorded personal testimonies, where necessary
- Arranged third-party readers for anonymised testimony
- Stage managed Public Hearings including catering, sound, layout
- Briefed community organisers, Mental Health Team and Commissioners
- Given this list of tasks there was clear scope for more leaders to take on leadership roles in the Commission. This would have mitigated any problems arising from the Coordinator being unwell and unable to work.
- In the working out of the role of Coordinator, there was a split between being a Coordinator and an Organiser. As the Coordinator, there should have been more Leadership delegation. As an Organiser, there should have been more leadership development. In the latter role, it seemed to work better.
- The Coordinator worked for the NHS, whose employment encouraged community engagement through Tyne & Wear Citizens. To have a Leader experienced in community organising and mental health was fortuitous.
- During the year-long Commission there was not a de jure dedicated Organiser.
- But the Coordinator was partly a de facto primary community organiser that was, crucially, paid. This could not be replicated in other Chapters unless the leader was in a similar position.

4.0 Commissioners

4.1 Leaders from Tyne & Wear Citizens

Reaction

- Recruit from membership to demonstrate we are a broad-based alliance
- Demonstrate the power of Tyne & Wear Citizens through the Commission to compel stakeholders to work with us: Parliament, the church, and the NHS
- Diverse panel of Commissioners: gender, ethnicity, age, faith.

Action

Tyne & Wear Citizens Commissioners:

- Imam of a Mosque
 - Chief Executive of a regional mental health charity
 - NHS Consultant Psychiatrist
 - Chief Executive of a charity for Carers of substance users
 - Chaplain of a university college
 - Chief Executive of a regional children's charity
 - Secondary School Lay Chaplain,
 - Secondary school students.
-
- The Coordinator and Community Organisers jointly agreed the Appointments
 - Leaders were invited personally by the Coordinator through a 121
 - Nine student leaders were Commissioners at the three Public Hearings

Evaluation

- The Commissioners came from the Mental Health Action Team.
- Two Commissioners were from institutions not in membership of Tyne & Wear Citizens. However, we needed their positive public recognition of our work to give the Commission public credibility in the mental health field.
- Students were recruited to give a strong adolescent voice on the Commission and develop them as Leaders in community organising.
- We did not have any GP representation on the panel of Commissioners. Indeed, the argument was put to us at one Hearing, that we should have. Since more than 90 percent of people who are unwell mentally go first to their GP.

Andrew Cole, Commissioner

What did you learn about your Leadership through this role?

I learned that I could speak with authority and genuineness in a fairly large meeting.

What did you learn about community organising through this role?

I learned about the considerable effort and organisation required to run a successful public meeting.

Michael Thompson, Commissioner

What did you learn about your leadership through this role?

It was a real privilege being able to listen to the stories of those who shared deeply personal testimony either in person or via audio recordings at the Mental Health Commission. As the stories were shared, I was reminded that we were there to discuss and formulate actions based on their experiences, and not on my own experiences or any preconceived notions of mental health support and services that I held.

This experience taught me that whenever I lead, it is so important to listen, to make sure the voices of those I work with are attentively heard and used as the focus and priority of my work. It is never about my voice and all about theirs.

What did you learn about community organising through this role?

I learned as far as possible it is always good to have our 'people with power' involved in the process, sitting at the table. The fact that an MP and a Chief Executive of an NHS Foundation Trust were present, engaged, and hearing the testimony, meant they were compelled to act in a way than if they were just reading the final report.

I also learned that we can achieve so much just by the act of being 'organised'. The commission ran smoothly because every scenario was thought of, and everything was planned out in advance. This echoes any meetings I have attended or chaired or any actions that I have been part of using the methodology of community organising... the timings, the scripting, the pinning on the Asks... these are so important to the method because they help people to feel a collective sense of achievement when an Ask is agreed to, or when a meeting feels like it has gone well.

Hannah Baldwin, Commissioner

My position on the Commission was my first introduction to Citizens and to community organising; sitting on the Sunderland panel caused me to be fascinated by the process and feel like my voice was properly being heard for the first time. The sense of community that the process of organising provides made me feel that real,

needed action was being taken. It hugely boosted my confidence to sit alongside diverse professionals as a sixth form student and resulted in me changing my university application and career trajectory.

I now study at the University of Manchester, where I got involved with the Greater Manchester Citizens chapter. I first got involved with the Misogyny Is Hate campaign, fighting to make misogyny a hate crime, which I now co-lead. I now also sit on the Greater Manchester Citizens leadership team and the national Citizens UK leadership team.

Being involved in the Commission empowered me to become a determined leader, and I'm currently enthusiastic about developing new leaders at university through building strong and empowered teams who feel confident in utilising community organising to introduce long lasting change.

4.2 Public Commissioners

Reaction

- We wanted to have public Commissioners to demonstrate our ability to compel public power to recognise and value our mental health agenda.
- We invited Commissioners with whom we had an on-going relationship.

Action and Evaluation

Member of Parliament

- Tyne & Wear Citizens was in relationship with this Member of Parliament prior to the General Election.
- She had attended the Launch Assembly of Tyne & Wear Citizens and responded positively to the Ask on mental health.
- After the Assembly, we invited her to be a [Commissioner](#).
- As the principal public Commissioner, we asked for her availability first.
- We renegotiated her attendance given the availability of the other public Commissioners.
- She participated in two Public Hearings.
- We issued the Commissioners with a [Memorandum of Understanding on their Role](#).

Chief Executive of an NHS Foundation Trust

- The NHS Chief Executive was invited to the Launch Assembly and was represented there by the Director of Psychological Services.
- After the Assembly, we asked the Chief Executive to be a Commissioner.
- Initially able to attend only one Public Hearing, we renegotiated dates.
- He participated in two Public Hearings.

Anglican Diocesan Bishop

- The Bishop had also attended the Launch Assembly as a Founding Partner.
- Two Leaders in Tyne & Wear Citizens Leaders, who were priests in the diocese, invited her to be a Commissioner.
- Initially able to attend two Public Hearings, the Bishop participated in one.



5.0 Public Hearings

5.1 Timetable

The criteria we set for arranging the programme of Public Hearings were:

- 3 Public Hearings at venues in Newcastle, Sunderland, and Durham.
- Each Public Hearing would last a full morning.
- Each **Public Hearing** consisted of three themes, determined by the issues derived from the testimonies.
- Each Public Hearing included time for a briefing and evaluation. Only Tyne & Wear Commissioners committed to do these.
- We provided lunch for the Commissioners.

5.2 Budget

The Coordinator and Community Organiser agreed that we needed a budget sufficient for the task. The Community Organiser raised £6000. This was our working budget to pay for:

- 3 Venues + catering (refreshment and lunch)
- Photographer
- Sound Engineer

- Researcher
- Report + Brochures
- Mental Health Assembly

This is how the expenditure was broken down:

Venues [3 venues]	£2500	This included refreshments for the general public, and lunch for the Commission team at all 3 venues
Photographer	£500	Attended two hearings plus photo editing = two days' work
Sound Engineer	£500	Attended two hearings + sound equipment hire
Researcher	£2000	4 days' work
Report + Brochures	£1500	Cost of printing 500 copies of Report + 500 brochures
Mental Health Assembly	£1500	Venue hire + VIP reception

Our budget was £6000, we spent £8500 - we went over budget.

However, to put this into context, the budget of the Citizens UK Commission on Islam was £60,000. This paid for a full-time Community Organiser and the travel costs of the Commissioners.

Tyne & Wear Citizens had a veteran leader who could use paid work time as an NHS Mental Health Chaplain to be the Coordinator of the Commission.

We did not offer, nor were we asked to reimburse Commissioners any of their travel expenses. We did provide refreshments and lunch for the Commissioners.

5.3 Public Hearing Roles

Commission Assistants

- Research Assistant to the Editor of the Living Well Report.
- Team of Leaders at each of the 3 Public Hearings to:
 - act as ushers and signpost people to their seats, the toilets, and refreshments.
 - staff a Citizens UK Information Stall.



Photographer

- We wanted photographs of the Hearings to use at the Mental Health Assembly.
- We hired a photographer to cover two of the three Public Hearings.
- He had produced the video for the Launch Assembly of Tyne & Wear Citizens.
- One venue had the facility to play the Launch Assembly video.



Sound Engineer

- All the venues had audio-visual facilities.
- However, not all the venues had a sound engineer. At our first venue there was a technical issue which affected the presentation of the testimonies.
- We then hired an engineer who ensured there were no further sound issues.
- We had not budgeted for this cost.

6.0 Actions (3 Case Studies)

6.1 Rubbish and fly-tipping on the Byker Housing Estate

- For years residents had not had their complaints addressed by the Byker Community Trust.
- During the Listening Campaign the Leadership team at St. Michael's Church, Byker gathered testimony from residents.
- The testimony focused on rubbish collection and fly-tipping on the housing estate.
- At the Mental Health Assembly, the Chief Executive of the Byker Community Trust agreed to work with Tyne & Wear Citizens, and Newcastle City Council to find a long-term solution to the problem of rubbish and fly-tipping.
- During the action St. Michael's church developed several residents as leaders and put them through 2-day and 6-day training.
- The Core Team broadened the action through a partnership with the local tenants' association, Pentecostal church, and Community Centre.

- Representatives of the Byker Community Trust, Newcastle City Council, and St Michael's church formed a working group to address street-by-street rubbish collection and fly-tipping.
- This action was won in full.

Helena Medley, Campaign Team Leader

What did you learn about your Leadership through this Action?

I know I found it hard to give this leadership role the time it needed. I learned that I missed some opportunities to try and work collaboratively earlier on in the action and this might have helped develop other local leaders. I was able to lead a team that was diverse and within which all but two people had not accessed any training in community organising. With hindsight, I might have prioritised arranging some bespoke training earlier on in the process.

What did you learn about community organising through this Action?

In this action we saw commitments made that in some ways had always been possible but hadn't happened. Not due to lack of awareness of the problem, but due to organisational barriers and cultures and things continuing as they always had. I learned that sometimes community organising can bring to the fore questions and solutions that have been by-passed.

I learned how vital it was to think about power in every aspect of our relating to people with positional power, to whom we were making 'asks'. Testimony was the source of our energy and an important focus point at any meeting we had when making asks. And I think we were still developing our craft in being alongside and supporting people to give their testimony in such a way that increased their power in the room.

How would you evaluate the outcome of the Action you led on?

We had positive responses to our asks and won the changes we wanted to see. We built relationships within civic local organisations who worked on this action together, and with statutory and quasi-private provider organisations to whom we put our asks. The relationships we built led to other positive outcomes connected with our original asks. A weakness was that in one aspect of our final ask (around provision of a resident map and information board) the local Action Team did not follow through with some communication which had been agreed. We lost some of the power we had built and did not secure the final outcome hoped for.

6.2 Suicidality amongst Durham university students

- Prior to the Listening Campaign there had been several suicides amongst students at Durham University.
- Through the Commission we heard first hand testimony from those affected.
- At the Mental Health Assembly, the Director of Student Services agreed to work with Tyne & Wear Citizens and with statutory services in Durham to address, in practical ways, suicidality amongst Durham university students.
- The action was led locally by a single leader whose institution was not in membership of Tyne & Wear Citizens, but which aspired to be.
- This leader believed the issue of suicidality would galvanise student anger and the college would join Tyne & Wear Citizens - this did not happen.
- Despite other institutions - colleges and churches - in Durham being in membership of Tyne & Wear Citizens none of the other local leaders joined the Action Team. Indeed, the largest part of the Leadership of this Action came from member institutions outside Durham.
- Because of the lack of local leadership support for this action, there were no developed relationships with local stakeholders council, police, NHS, and community groups. Meaning the Action Team lacked a clear set of asks to put to these stakeholders.
- Durham University agreed to crisis-proof their university communications with details of organisations who support people who are suicidal, increase the number of trained counsellors in the Student Wellbeing Service, and roll-out Mental Health First Aid training for students and staff. Local statutory and voluntary services left the door open for us to go back to them with concrete proposals for future collaboration.
- This action was partly won.



6.3 *Schools-based Counselling*

- Testimony from students and parents at a secondary academy, and students and staff at a primary school shaped this action.
- At the Mental Health Assembly students publicly asked the Newcastle MP, who had served on the Commission, to work with Tyne & Wear Citizens to establish a pilot programme of Schools-based Counselling in the North East.
- At the Tyne & Wear Mayoral Assembly each of the mayoral candidates agreed to roll-out Schools-based Counselling across the North East during their term as Mayor.
- The Core Team has now developed a fully costed proposal to roll-out Schools-based Counselling across the North East.
- We have also produced a financed proposal for the provision of Schools-based Counselling throughout schools in England, as happens elsewhere in the UK.
- We are collaborating with politicians, including members of the Labour Shadow Team, to develop our campaign into policy.
- The Core Team is working with unions who are supporting our campaign by adopting it as union policy.
- Nationally we have the expert input of the BACP, who worked with us to launch our Schools-based Counselling programme at the NEAT Academy Trust.
- Tyne & Wear Citizens is also leading on an emerging Citizens UK National Schools-based Counselling Campaign.
- Two institutions, which were at the heart of the campaign, have joined Tyne & Wear Citizens.
- This action is on-going.

7.0 *Mental Health Assembly*

7.1 *Mental Health Assembly Script*

7.2 *Living Well*, the report of the Citizens Commission on Mental Health:

Mental Wellbeing and Public Life in the North East

Evaluation

8.0 Citizens Commission on Mental Health

Could Tyne & Wear Citizens have had a mental health focused Listening Campaign instead of a Commission?

Arguably the mental health Listening Campaign was encompassed by the entirety of the year long Citizens Commission: the three Public Hearings, 2 Issues Workshops, published Report, Mental Health Assembly. The year long Commission was the Listening Campaign - Issues to Solutions, and Actions.

The issues raised at the Delegates Assembly - waiting times and a 'postcode lottery' for prescriptions - were only the tip of the iceberg and not representative of the issues raised through the Commission. For example, a 'postcode lottery' for medication was not raised in any of the testimonies gathered during the Commission. Without the Commission we would have been going after the presenting problems and not the real issues. For example, GP waiting times was a cover for other, more nuanced issues for example, the ambience, layout, and decoration of a CAMHS clinic. The testimonies did raise issues not revealed before. For example, the queuing system in a Student Wellbeing Service, fly-tipping on a Newcastle housing estate, and suicidality at Durham University.

Through the year-long Commission we identified 17 actions which we believed we could win. We won 11 of those actions; a success rate of 70%. Those that we did not win highlighted our lack of power to make the change happen. Several of the actions escalated during the course of the campaign. One of which - Schools-based Counselling - has developed as a North East campaign and is a Citizens UK national campaign.



Without the Commission we would not have imagined into reality the 17 actions we decided on. Without the energy derived from the Commission we would not have won as many as we did. It was the drive of the leaders, engaged in the Commission process who led, and won the 17 mental health actions. All of this in our first year of launching as a Citizens UK Chapter.

The Commission itself was a vehicle for community organising. Indeed, the Citizens Commission on Mental Health was Action - the oxygen of organising.

With thanks to Tyne and Wear Citizens; and Revd Dr Simon D Mason, Coordinator of the Citizens Commission on Mental Health: Wellbeing and Public Life in the North East; for producing this manual.

8.1 Leadership Development

- We began this year-long Commission five weeks after the Launch Assembly of Tyne & Wear Citizens.
- At the start of the Commission some Leaders had completed 6-day training, and some others had done 2-day training. Most of the Leaders were untrained in community organising.
- 1200+ people engaged in the Citizens Commission on Mental Health:
 - 450 people attending the Mental Health Assembly
 - 336 individual testimonies gathered
 - 200+ people attending the Public Hearings
 - 120 Leaders engaging in the Citizens Commission on Mental Health
 - 49 Leaders taking key roles in the Commission and in taking Action
 - 28 Leaders trained in community organising
- One hundred and twenty Leaders formed the Mental Health Action Team
- 30-50 Leaders, on average, attended the Mental Health Action Team meetings each month
- Fifteen member institutions of Tyne & Wear Citizens engaged in the Commission
- Eight institutions provided Commissioners
- Three institutions joined Tyne & Wear Citizens through the Commission
- 12 member institutions of Tyne & Wear Citizens led the Commission: 5 faith group institutions, two regional mental health charities, two universities, two regional children's charities, and one education academy.
 - All Saints church, Gosforth, Newcastle
 - North East Wellbeing
 - PROPS North East
 - Children North East
 - ReCoCo, Newcastle
 - College of Hild Bede, Durham university
 - St John the Baptist church, Newcastle
 - Newcastle Central Mosque
 - St Michael's Church, Byker, Newcastle
 - Newcastle Quakers
 - St Thomas More RC Academy, North Shields
 - Newcastle University
- 21 Leaders went on two day training through the Commission.
- 7 Leaders went on six day training through the Commission.
- 9 Student leaders from one member institution were Commissioners.
- 7 Leaders from 7 member institutions were Commissioners - 4 had done 6-day Citizens UK national training, the others had completed 2-day training.



- The team of Commissioners consisted of 9 students, 3 Chief Executive Officers, an Imam, Consultant Psychiatrist, Lay Chaplain, and a university Chaplain.
- The public Commissioners were a Member of Parliament, a Chief Executive of an NHS Foundation Trust, and an Anglican Diocesan Bishop.
- Five leaders from 5 member institutions were Commission Assistants - all had done 2-day training.
- Twenty-six leaders comprised the Action Teams - 7 had completed 6-day Citizens UK national training, all the others had done 2-day training.
- 3 leaders were Campaign Team Leaders for the 17 actions
- 2 leaders Chaired the Mental Health Action Team during its year of operation
- 2 leaders were the Secretary of the Mental Health Action Team
- 1 leader was the Chair of the Commission
- 1 leader was the Secretary to the Commission
- 1 leader was the Coordinator of the Commission
- 1 leader wrote, and a second Leader produced, [*Living Well*](#), the report of the Citizens Commission on Mental Health: Mental Wellbeing and Public Life in the North East
- Three institutions joined Tyne & Wear Citizens through the Commission

8.2 Power

- The Citizens Commission on Mental Health in the North East was the largest civic society Commission on Mental Health in the UK. 336 individual testimonies gathered
- 9 key themes identified from these testimonies
- 3 Public Hearings took place in Newcastle, Sunderland, and Durham
- 30 people gave public testimony at the Public Hearings
- 200+ people attended the three Public Hearings
- 17 actions were acted on by the Mental Health Action Team
- 450 people attended the Tyne & Wear Citizens Mental Health Assembly - to date the largest single-issue, in-person Citizens UK assembly by a single chapter.

8.3 Actions

- 11 of the 17 actions won - a success rate of 70%.
- We escalated several of the actions after the Mental Health Assembly: the design of a CAMHS Clinic, and fly-tipping on an east Newcastle housing estate.

Ongoing Action: Schools-based Counselling Campaign

- Production of a fully-costed [Proposal](#) for the roll-out of Schools-based Counselling in England, in line with the rest of the UK

8.4 Media

- [BBC Look North](#) reported on the early stages of the Commission and broadcast live from the Mental Health assembly - a first for Tyne & Wear Citizens.
- Radio 4, All in the Mind interviewed key Leaders after the Launch Assembly and a year later at the Mental Health Assembly
- The regional newspaper, *The Journal* ran a [four-page editorial](#) on mental health in the North East ahead of the Commission

8.5 Additional actions

- [Living Well](#) - report on the Citizens Commission on Mental Health
- Two research papers on the Commission presented at the 2018 European Conference on Mental Health by [Dr Joe Barton](#) and [Mr Liam Spencer](#)
- Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear NHS Foundation Trust signed up to become a Training Sponsor Partner of Tyne & Wear Citizens. Whereby the Trust offsets the costs of local and national training for Leaders involved in mental health actions.
- Production of a Citizens UK online Manual for Organising a Citizens Commission



Resources

[Access to Mental Health Counselling, 2020 \(IPPR\)](#)

[The 'new normal': The future of education after Covid-19, 2020 \(IPPR\)](#)

[School and community-based counselling operating toolkit, 2020 \(BACP/ Welsh Govt.\)](#)

[Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2021 \(NHS\)](#)

[Review of \(Welsh\) statutory school and community-based counselling services, 2022 \(Welsh Govt.\)](#)

[SCOPED Framework, 2022 \(BACP\)](#)

[Terms of Reference](#) for the Citizens Commission on Mental Health

[Listening Campaign Testimony Form](#)

[GDPR Student Form](#)

[GDPR Adult Form](#)

[Emails to Commissioners](#)

[Roles of Commissioners](#)

[Public Hearing Script](#) (Durham)

[Tyne & Wear Citizens Mental Health Assembly Script](#)

[Living Well Report](#)

[Living Well Report - Executive Summary](#)

[Citizens UK Proposal](#) for Schools-based Counselling in England

[BBC Look North](#) broadcast from the Mental Health assembly

[The Journal](#) newspaper article on mental health in the North East

[Research paper](#) presented at the 2018 European Conference on Mental Health