The BIG Lincoln Conversation 2026:

Is Lincoln Ready for Change?



LocalMotion Lincoln

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Introduction

LocalMotion is committed to tackling the root causes of social, economic and environmental injustices, working across six geographical places in the UK.

LocalMotion Lincoln are listening to communities, seeking to understand what drives them forward and holds them back, and uncover local strengths. They want to walk alongside communities to understand their experiences and collaborate on how best to address the challenges being faced locally and beyond.

To support this, they have been working with Social Change for four years to undertake an annual behavioural insights survey. Named The BIG Lincoln Conversation, this online and offline survey aims to explore the experiences of those living, working and studying in Lincoln, revealing local challenges stopping communities from flourishing, building a picture of happiness and hope in Lincoln and how this changes year-on-year to better understand our local communities.

This year, the survey placed a focus on asking; Is Lincoln Ready for Change?

It sought to explore what change, if any, they wanted to see, who should be responsible, whether they should have a role in making change happen, and what barriers needed to be removed or overcome. This research details the key findings and behavioural insights captured through the survey and subsequent analysis, in addition to a set of recommendations as to how communities could be supported to overcome key challenges, invest in community action, and ultimately thrive.

These insights are publicly available to support individuals, groups and organisations in their own ambitions and support, as well as being used by the LocalMotion Lincoln network as a continuous listening tool.

Methodology: What we did

Insights survey

A quantitative insights survey, with some qualitative questioning, has been selected for exploring life in Lincoln to reach and obtain feedback from a large audience, and capture findings to inform potential future in-depth qualitative research through local researchers. This was open to people living and/or working in the City of Lincoln.

The survey was shared through the following methods:

Method	Responses achieved
Printed surveys shared at a local event	30 (one by scanning a QR code and completing online instead)
Digitally with stakeholder and partner networks	67
Lincoln Independent press releases and website banners	21
Paid social media	200
Organic social media	Included in the above
Word of mouth	Unconfirmed
Posters and flyer within the community	28

In addition to the above, support of £1,000 was made available for local people to run events in exchange for feedback and responses to The BIG Lincoln Conversation 2026 question, "Is Lincoln Ready for Change?". As a result, an estimated 10 responses were attributable to one funded community event and approximately 29 to another.

This year, the stakeholder network with which the survey was shared was widened to include organisations beyond the core group to support wider reach and engagement. This was in addition to the use of Lincoln Independent advertising, posters and flyers to further raise awareness of this opportunity locally and encourage residents to engage.

The survey achieved 346 total responses, which represents the City of Lincoln with a 95% confidence level and 5.26% confidence interval. This means we can be 95% confident that the survey results reflect the views of the wider population, allowing for a 5.26% margin of error. For example, if 70% chose blue as their favourite colour, we can be 95% confident that between 64.74% and 75.26% of the wider population would say the same. A breakdown of demographic information for this sample is included in **Appendix F**.

Learnings

Questions enabled respondents to report their experiences and intentions. There is a risk that answers are influenced by a desire to present oneself positively, particularly when discussing whether one would take action if barriers were removed. To mitigate risk of this response bias, answer options were presented in neutral language to avoid suggesting positive or negative choices, and options were randomised for each participant.

In 2025, the BIG Conversation was shared across the summer months and show low uptake, which is a common trend in research as people take time to rest or spend with family. This year, the survey was purposely launched across Spring months (April – July 2026) to see if this influenced uptake, and in fact saw a higher response rate. Higher response numbers were also seen in 2023, which was also disseminated over the Spring period. Whilst we are unable to directly attribute responses to seasonal influences, we will continue to strive to launch the Conversation during this time.

Whilst printed surveys were provided to a local event, a number were excluded due to participants not explicitly answering that they consented to their responses being used for the survey, even if they provided answers to later questions. In-line with GDPR and Market Research Society Principles, positive opt-in must be obtained, and not assumed, to ensure appropriate collection and processing of data. This is a key learning for future to ensure that print-based survey dissemination needs to include clearer prompts to remind participants that consent must be provided for their responses to be used.

Behavioural insights analysis

Following survey analysis, we used our behavioural science expertise to go one step further to identify behavioural insights that go beyond what the current picture is to communicate why this is the case. In essence, they demonstrate the cognitive biases, facilitators, and challenges maintaining current behaviour and preventing positive change. This in-depth understanding and further use of established frameworks then supported the development of recommendations for the future, detailing not only what needs to happen to support positive change but also how.

The COM-B Model of Behaviour (Michie et al., 2011) was included to consider what Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation factors positively and/or negatively impact people's experiences and behaviours (**please see Appendix A for an overview of this model**).
We also embedded Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943) throughout to support understanding of the extent to which people are achieving and fulfilling each need and the barriers to them doing so.

Fig 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943)



This use of behavioural theory helps to highlight what is preventing people living and/or working in Lincoln from Self-Actualising (i.e., being the best one can be), and how they can be further supported to do so by first being enabled to fulfil each need.

From this analysis, we identified three behavioural insights (**shown on page 24**) and developed **15 recommendations** (**shown on pages 25 – 30**) for change.

Key figures

346	People responded to the survey
77%	Recorded a positive happiness score
75%	Recorded a positive satisfaction score
79%	Knew what change they wanted to see in Lincoln
52%	Initially felt there were steps they could take to help make change happen
38%	Identified limited confidence or knowledge of where to start as a barrier
89%	Said clear instructions on how to act would encourage them to make a change
99%	Said seeing others make a change would encourage them to do so too

Key findings

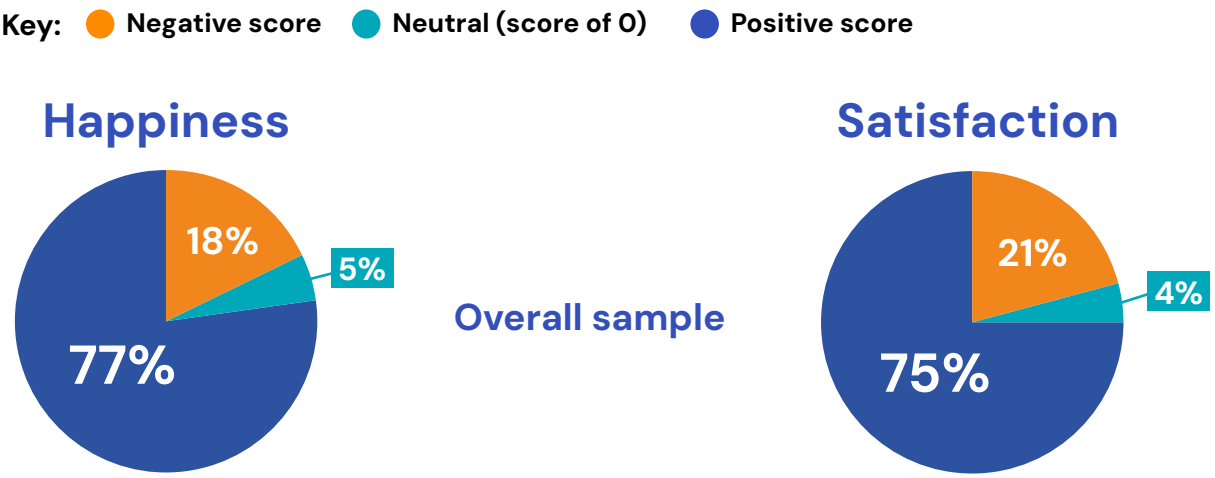
Happiness and satisfaction in Lincoln

Annually across 2023-2031, the BIG Conversation seeks to understand current happiness and satisfaction levels, and what factors may be positively or negatively influencing these. In 2026, the majority of people in the City of Lincoln present with positive happiness and satisfaction scores. However, there is still a proportion with negative scores, influenced by a range of factors across personal security, social connection and independence.

Overall scores

Overall, three quarters of survey respondents had a positive happiness or satisfaction score (77% and 75% respectively), and around one in five had negative scores (18% happiness and 21% satisfaction respectively).

Fig 2 and 3. Happiness and Satisfaction scores across the survey sample



When looking at these scores by age, those aged 16-24 are among the most likely to have negative scores (25% happiness and 35% satisfaction), in addition to those aged 25-34 (22% and 29%) and 45-54 (24% and 32%).

Whilst scores are slightly more positive for ages 35-44 and 55-64, this does not hugely differ from the average. Those aged 65 and above, however, show significantly higher than average positive scores across both happiness (88%) and satisfaction (96%). Whilst this is consistent with the BIG Conversation 2023 and 2024, it is markedly different from 2025, where this group actually showed the lowest levels of satisfaction.

What impacts these scores?

To support understanding of what impacts happiness and satisfaction scores, participants were asked the extent to which they feel able to make a change in a number of areas across their lives. This includes health, happiness, safety and security, employment and education, financial security, relationships, involvement in the community and impact on the environment and political climate. This is in addition to exploring what they feel negatively impacts them. The survey also sought to explore the opposite: what they feel has a positive impact on them, thereby supporting happiness and satisfaction scores. Understanding what makes a difference to people's scores is essential to know how collective wellbeing can be improved.

Overall feedback

Respondents felt able to change:

- Social life and friendships: **76%**
- Physical health: **75%**
- Mental health: **74%**
- Happiness and contentedness: **71%**

Respondents least able to change:

- Political climate: **51%**
- Income levels: **37%**
- Career progression: **27%**
- Employment: **26%**

Interestingly, the areas that people feel able or unable to change link closely with those they feel impacted by. In terms of what positively impacts them, this includes relationships and good health and wellbeing, both of which they feel are in their power to change. However, in terms of what they are concerned about and negatively impacts them, this includes the political climate and cost of living / financial security, both of which tie in with what they feel most unable to change.

This may indicate that perceived control influences whether something is experienced in a positive or negative light. If something feels within their control, people are better able to shape it towards what they want, making it more likely to have a positive impact. However, if they feel unable to make a change, it may feel more out of their hands and therefore less likely to reflect what they want.

Fig 4. What concerns and impacts people

I am most concerned about	I am most negatively impacted by...	I am most positively impacted by...
Access to health and social care services	Cost of living and financial security	Family and close relationships
Cost of living and financial security	Access to health and social care services	Hobbies, interests and personal development
Political climate and leadership	Political climate and leadership	Good health and wellbeing / Friends and social connections

Interestingly, this is the first year that concerns about climate change is not included in the top three areas of concern, with this usually being selected over political climate and leadership. Further to the above, qualitative feedback also highlighted the following themes:

- **International and national challenges: concerns relating to war, political leadership, immigration, the environment and healthcare**
- **The social climate: concerns around increased hostility and community tensions, and positive impacts of community diversity**
- **Local opportunities: a lack of things to do locally both for residents and to encourage visitors, and the need for more places for leisure and family activities**

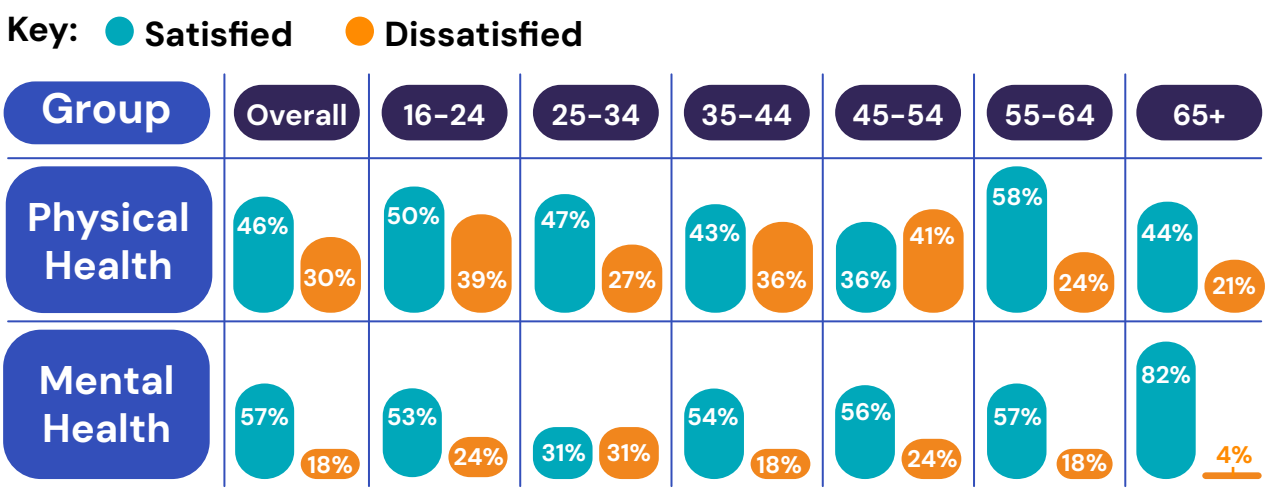
Deeper exploration of these impacts across the different age groups provides some insight into why happiness and satisfaction scores differ, particularly in relation to lower scores for younger people and higher scores for older age groups.

Safety Needs

Concerns around financial security, employment and the political climate indicate people feel safety needs are at risk, and with a portion of people feeling unable to make a change in these areas, this may have implications for happiness and satisfaction scores.

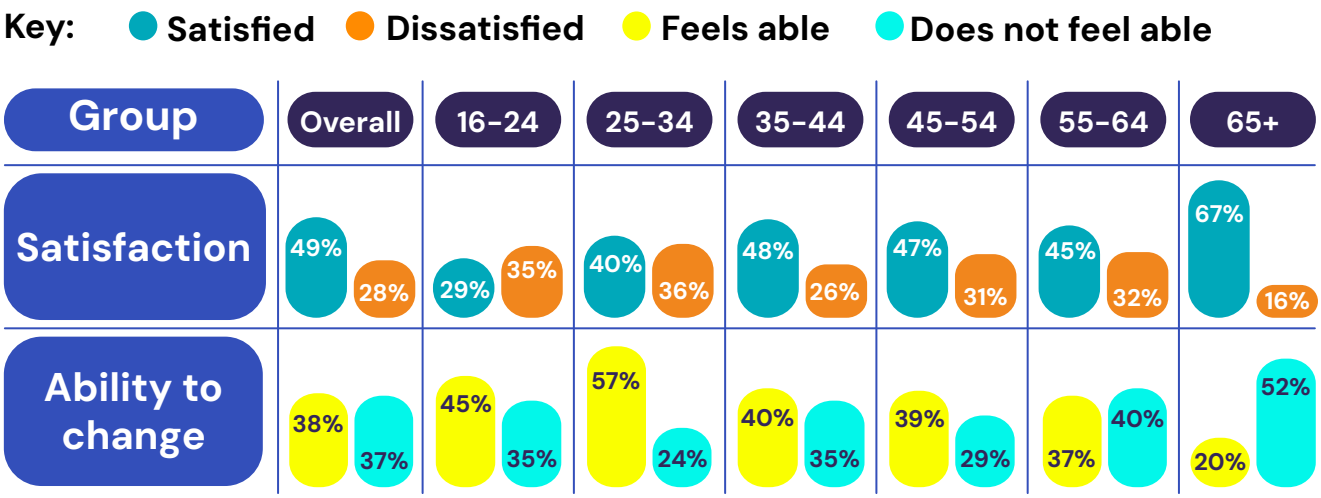
While people feel positively impacted by good health and wellbeing, not everyone is currently satisfied with this. Overall, a third of people are likely to be dissatisfied with their physical health, and this sentiment is particularly prominent for those aged 16-24 (39%), 35-44 (36%) and 45-54 (41%). Those aged 55-64, however, are more likely than average to be satisfied with their health. Additionally, those aged 25-34 are more likely than average to be dissatisfied with their mental health, whilst those over the age of 65 are more likely than average to be satisfied.

Fig 5. Satisfaction with health



In terms of income, similar to previous years, satisfaction tends to be lower among younger age groups, particularly those aged 16-24 and 25-34. However, they are also more likely to feel they are able to make a change to this than other groups. Interestingly, whilst those aged 65 and over are more satisfied than average with their income levels, they are also the most likely to feel unable to make a change.

Fig 6. Satisfaction with and perceived ability to change income levels

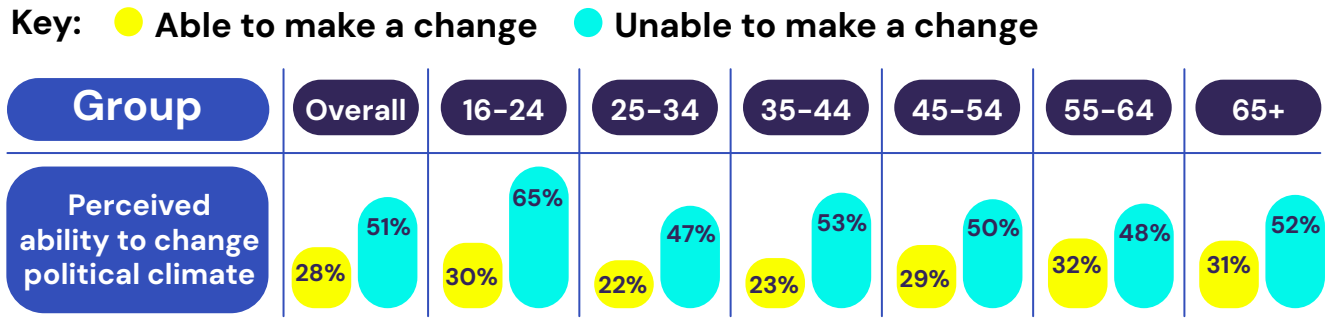


Similar trends can be seen with career, with the youngest age group (16-24) again being more likely than average to be dissatisfied with their current picture (31% compared with 15% average) but more likely to feel able to make a change (60% compared with 50%), whereas those over 65 are more likely to be satisfied (60% compared with 54%) but also unable to make a change (43% compared with 27%).

Together, this shows that whilst younger people may be less satisfied in certain areas they may also feel they have the opportunity to make improvements in future. For older adults, it may be that feeling unable to make a change has led them to be more accepting of their circumstances, or that they may simply be content as they are and have less of a desire to make a change regardless of whether they feel they are able to.

Challenges are more likely to arise when people feel both dissatisfied with their current situation, and unable to change it. This is particularly true for political climate and leadership, where not only did people feel negatively impacted by this, but around half of people across every age group felt unable to make a change, with less than a third feeling able to make a change.

Fig 7. Perceived ability to change political climate

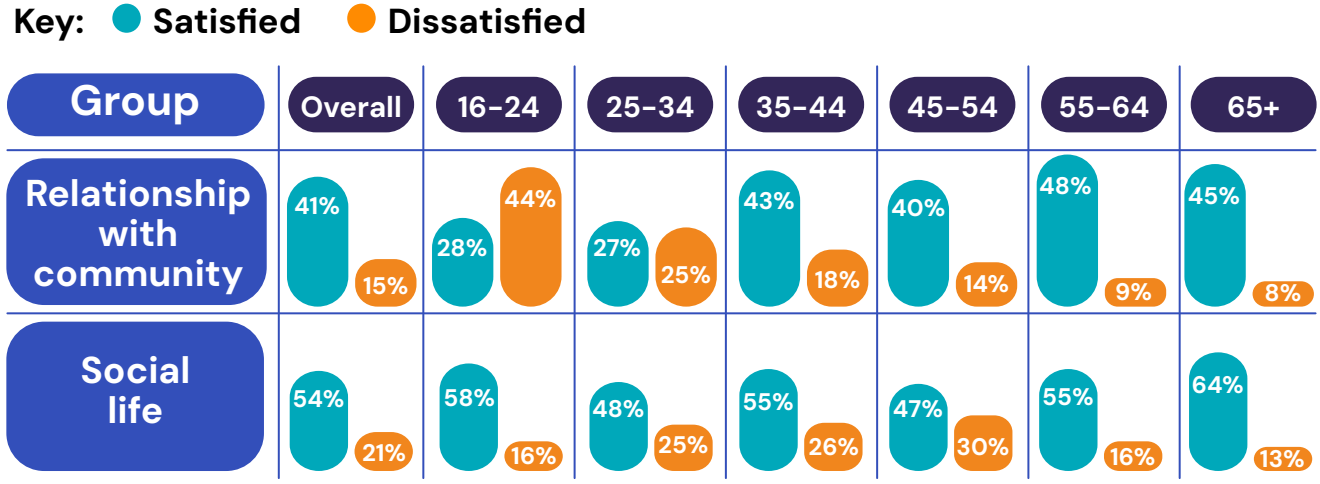


Belonging Needs

Social connection is essential to fulfilment of belonging needs and not only are a third of respondents positively impacted by social connection (32%), but many feel like they are able to make a change in these areas, with 76% feeling able to change their social life and 63% relationships with their community.

However, this is not uniform across all ages. Those aged 16-24 and 25-34 are more likely than average to feel dissatisfied with community relationships, with 20% of those aged 16-24 feeling unable to change their relationships with neighbours (compared to an average of 13%). Additionally, 30% of those aged 45-54 are dissatisfied with their social life, but those over 65 are more likely than average to be satisfied with this.

Fig 8. Satisfaction across social metrics



Interestingly, this relates to similar patterns seen in happiness and satisfaction scores, with those aged 16-24, 25-34 and 45-54 having a higher proportion of people with negative scores, and 65+ with positive. Whilst these scores are a result of a multitude of factors, this relationship is indicative of the influence of social connection in achieving happiness and fulfilment, and the importance of belonging needs in influencing happiness and satisfaction scores.

Esteem Needs

Being a unique individual with the respect of others is essential to fulfilling esteem needs. However, barriers may exist in terms of current opportunities to achieve these.

Personal independence is of particular importance to those aged 16-24, with it positively impacting 35% (compared to an average of 23%). This can come in the form of having things to do locally, but whilst this positively impacts 30% (compared to 19%), 25% feel negatively impacted by local opportunities and 35% by local infrastructure. Similarly, when thinking about acceptance, 30% feel positively impacted by this (compared with 12% average) whilst 25% feel negatively impacted by equality, diversity and inclusion (compared to an average of 12%). This could indicate that the requirements for those aged 16-24 to feel a sense of personal independence are not currently being met (i.e., local opportunities and acceptance), creating barriers that prevent fulfilment of esteem needs.

Personal independence also positively impacts those over 65 more than average (30% compared to 23%), however they may be more likely to seek this through community engagement. When considering local community initiatives, all age groups across 16-44 are more likely than average to be dissatisfied with their current involvement. However, not only are people aged 65 and over are more likely to be satisfied than average (56% compared with 38%), but they are also more likely to feel they are able to make a change in their involvement (68% compared with 61%). This could indicate that the requirements for those aged 65 and over to feel a sense of personal independence may currently be met (i.e., community involvement), supporting fulfilment of esteem needs.

The importance of meeting personal independence requirements and therefore esteem needs may be reflected in happiness and satisfaction scores. For example, those aged 16-24 who appear less likely to be fulfilling esteem needs are also more likely to have negative happiness and satisfaction scores. Conversely, those aged 65 and over, who appear more likely to be fulfilling these needs, are also more likely to have positive scores. This suggests that personal independence and fulfilment of esteem needs may play an important role in overall happiness and satisfaction.

What the survey tells us about respondents aged 16-24

Respondents aged 16-24 made up 6% of the survey sample. Their results offer a starting point for discussion with young system leaders, but should not be treated as representative of all young people in Lincoln.

Wellbeing: 25% recorded a negative happiness score and 35% a negative satisfaction score, compared with 18% and 21% across the sample. Some 39% were dissatisfied with their physical health, compared with 30% overall.

Community connection: 28% were satisfied with their relationships with the community, compared with 41% overall. Some 20% felt unable to change their relationships with neighbours, compared with 13% overall.

Independence and opportunities: 35% reported a positive impact from personal independence, compared with 23% overall. However, 25% reported negative impacts from local opportunities, 35% from local infrastructure and 25% from equality, diversity and inclusion.

Perceived control: 60% felt able to change their career progression, compared with 50% overall, while 65% felt unable to change the political climate, compared with 51% overall.

These findings should support further discussion with young people about their priorities, accessible opportunities and preferred ways of contributing to local decisions and action.

Is Lincoln Ready for Change?

In this year's BIG Conversation, there was a desire to explore what change means to people. Before encouraging people to make a change, it is first important to understand whether this is wanted, what this looks like, and what people feel is realistic and achievable. The findings from this section provide valuable insight not only into ways local challenges could be addressed, but also how people and communities could be better supported to do so.

What do people want?

While 57% of respondents wanted change in their own day-to-day lives, 79% knew what changes they wanted to see in Lincoln. This distinction reflects the different focus of the questions: change in people's personal lives and change across the city. Comments on the survey advertisement also showed that change meant different things to different people. Some wanted to restore aspects of Lincoln as it once was, while others wanted the city to continue developing.

In terms of what change people want to see, local infrastructure was a frequent theme raised. This is reflected in 45% of survey respondents wanting to see better local services, with further comments showing an interest in having more things to do, events in the community, a revival of the city centre and opportunities for people to connect. A further 35% said they wanted to see changes to local infrastructure and transport, with qualitative discussions touching on traffic, parking, cycling and walking routes, better public transport and concerns around bikes and scooters.

People also talked about their local area, with 35% wanting to see changes to their green spaces, local streets and public spaces. Conversations across social media and the survey highlighted a sentiment that Lincoln's environment is less cared for than previously, with comments about overgrown green spaces and messy verges. However, other comments talk about "a lack of nature". This raises questions around what nature means to people, and whether it needs to be presented as tidy and aesthetically pleasing in order to be considered as sufficient nature. A further 34% wanted safer, cleaner neighbourhoods, with people discussing a lack of safe, clean public spaces and facilities. Suggestions included toilets, places to be active and youth spaces.

However, whilst people have an idea of what change they want to see, only 57% think meaningful change in 1-2 years feels realistic, with 28% saying they do not think it is. This indicates that for those who would want to see change, it currently feels out of reach.

Who is responsible?

Whilst many survey respondents feel they can make change happen (74%) and that they have a part to play in making change possible (60%), the findings suggest they are unlikely to take the first step in doing so.

When presented with different scenarios and asked who they think is responsible for making change happen in these areas, The Council, Neighbourhoods and Local Businesses/Employers were frequently seen as the most responsible, with 'Myself' often coming in fourth.

Fig 9. Perceptions of responsibility for change across scenarios

Group	Able to make a change	Unable to make a change	Unable to make a change
Cleaning/tidying local green spaces, streets and public spaces	The council / public services	My neighbourhood	Myself
Improving how decisions are made for the local area	The council / public services	My neighbourhood	Businesses and employers
Setting up local events and opportunities (e.g., clubs and groups)	My neighbourhood	The council / public services	Businesses and employers
Making it easier for people to get involved in local events	The council / public services	My neighbourhood	Businesses and employers
Supporting a local cause (e.g., through raising money and spreading awareness)	My neighbourhood	Businesses and employers	The council / public services
Increased sense of community and neighbours supporting each other	My neighbourhood	The council / public services	Myself

As shown through the above, The Council was often prioritised for areas relating to improvements to local areas, Neighbourhoods for increasing local connection, and Businesses/employers for supporting local causes. Across the scenarios, whilst a portion of people did report themselves as being responsible for making change, the above shows they were likely to report others as more so. This does not necessarily indicate a lack of willingness to enact change themselves, but perhaps that they feel others can take a more leading role.

Interestingly, those they see as most responsible also reflects those who people would most like to work with to make change happen, with 72% stating local community organisations, 52% the council and public services, and 47% with friends, family and neighbours. This suggests strength in connection and collaboration.

What barriers exist?

Despite the majority of people thinking making a change is in their power, only half of people (52%) feel there are steps they can take to support the change they want to see. Whilst this links with perceptions that others are responsible for making change happen, the survey explored what wider barriers exist and how people could be helped.

Survey respondents were asked to explore what barriers existed for their neighbourhoods and themselves, how likely they felt each were to take action if these barriers were removed, and why.

Psychological Capability

A lack of confidence and knowledge in what they can do, how they can do it, and how they can implement the ideas they do have was a frequent barrier in making change happen. This is shown by the fact that 68% don't think neighbours know what's happening in their areas and 38% feel they themselves lack confidence and knowledge of where to start.

Increased communication about opportunities available in the local area or more support for communities to get involved would be key for overcoming these awareness and knowledge barriers. Indeed, when asked what would support them to make a change, 48% cited clear information, 16% having someone to check in on them, 16% training and 13% practical help. With these Capability barriers removed, people said both neighbourhoods and themselves would be more likely to get involved with change simply because they would know more about what to do, how to do it, and have support to help them do so. This is reflected in the fact that 89% would be encouraged to take action in their community (51% of which said very much so) if they were told exactly how they could do so.

Furthermore, when respondents were asked again if they think there are steps they can take to make change happen after reflecting on these barriers, the proportion of people agreeing with this statement increased from 52% to 60%. This change suggests that structured reflection could help influence perceptions around opportunities for change, their role, the barriers they face and what would help them.

Together, this highlights the importance of building local knowledge of the steps people can take to encourage change in their community and opportunities to do so.

Physical Opportunity

Limited time, resources and accessible opportunities can reduce people's capacity to participate in community action, even when they want to get involved.

Barriers respondents identified for themselves:

- Lack of time: **38%.**
- Lack of money or cost-of-living pressures: **35%.**
- Health, disability or caring responsibilities: **26%.**
- Transport and access: **11%.**

Barriers respondents thought affected their neighbourhoods:

- Costs and financial constraints: **30%.**
- Events or services at inconvenient times: **26%.**
- Lack of safe, affordable spaces to meet: **21%.**

These barriers are further reflected in what people think would help them take more action, with 29% selecting time and flexibility in their schedule, 28% financial support, and 13% practical help (e.g., with childcare, transport and equipment). This reflects a range of opportunity barriers in place, both relating to personal lives and responsibilities, but also in terms of what is facilitated by local services and infrastructure. If these barriers were removed, people felt that they would be able to enact change simply by the fact that these resource constraints are no longer being placed on them.

Social Opportunity

The physical environment is not the only barrier faced by people and neighbourhoods, with a lack of community cohesion frequently being raised as a challenge.

Respondents feel that communities have become more siloed and separate, and community spirit and togetherness is lacking. This is reflected in the fact that 28% think that neighbours likely feel unwelcome and that activities aren't for them, and 27% themselves do not think social support is available. Even if barriers are removed, some respondents feel change is still unlikely due to a lack of care or interest to get involved. This perceived lack of action by others can be detrimental to personal motivations, with some participants having the attitude of if others aren't interested in making change possible, why should they be.
That being said, there is a desire to work with others to make change happen, whether it be with local organisations (72%), public services (52%) or friends, family and the neighbourhood (47%). However, linking in with perceptions of responsibility, there is a desire to see others take the first step as an act of reassurance that people are not alone in their mission for change. This is reflected in 99% of respondents saying they would be encouraged to take action if they saw others making a change, 76% of which said very much so. Qualitative responses supported this view that seeing others make a change would encourage them, as did 45% of respondents wanting to see more visible action from local councils and services.

This visible action from others is seen as a key step towards increased togetherness within the community, with people feeling that barriers could be overcome through stronger local networks, increased community cohesion and more working together. Qualitative responses indicated the importance of feeling peace, cohesion and shared values within the community to encourage investment in action for change.

Together, this shows the role of social proof in encouraging people to invest in change. It should not be an individual goal, but rather a collective one across the community, with people working together for the betterment of their area.

Automatic Motivation

Personal motivation is highly influential to change. On the one hand, some people feel that their neighbourhoods and/or themselves genuinely want to make change happen, but face wider capability and opportunity barriers to doing so. In fact, some reported that having barriers removed wouldn't make them more active in their community simply because they are already involved. However, others feel that general disinterest provides a barrier not only to neighbourhoods, but also themselves.

One potential contributing factor to this perceived disinterest is that 12% do not think getting involved with change would make a difference. This links into capability themes relating to not knowing what impact their efforts would make, and therefore why they should take action. In fact, 96% state that knowing how their actions would help make a change would encourage them to take action, 62% of which said very much so. Furthermore, 96% would find being told about how change is progressing as encouraging, 66% of which said very much so.

This shows that simply knowing how actions would support change is encouraging to people, and may present it as a more realistic, tangible goal than abstract thinking of what may happen if they took action. However, providing this support and communication is essential to test whether this would in reality encourage change, or if these responses are an example of people wanting to present themselves desirably.

Reflective Motivation

Even when supporting change is considered important, not everyone can prioritise this in the face of wider responsibilities, such as personal health, childcare and work. However, people feel these barriers are more prominent for their neighbourhoods, with 66% thinking their neighbours are too busy with other responsibilities and only 32% feeling the same applies to them. This is interesting to note when considering people want their neighbourhoods to take leading steps in enacting change: they want to see others act, but feel they have greater barriers and unwillingness to do so.

As these responsibilities are fixed, overcoming these barriers would require demonstrating why supporting community action and change should be a priority for them. Knowing the benefit of their actions on themselves, people they know and others is one route to achieving this, with respondents reporting that they would find this encouraging. They would also find it encouraging to know that they would experience these benefits in the short-term or near future. This links in with exchange theory, in that people want to know what they would gain as a result of a particular course of action. However, this exchange has limits. As shown in the table below, people are less encouraged by the idea of knowing their efforts will have an impact in the future without them necessarily experiencing this themselves.

Fig 10. What would encourage people to act towards change

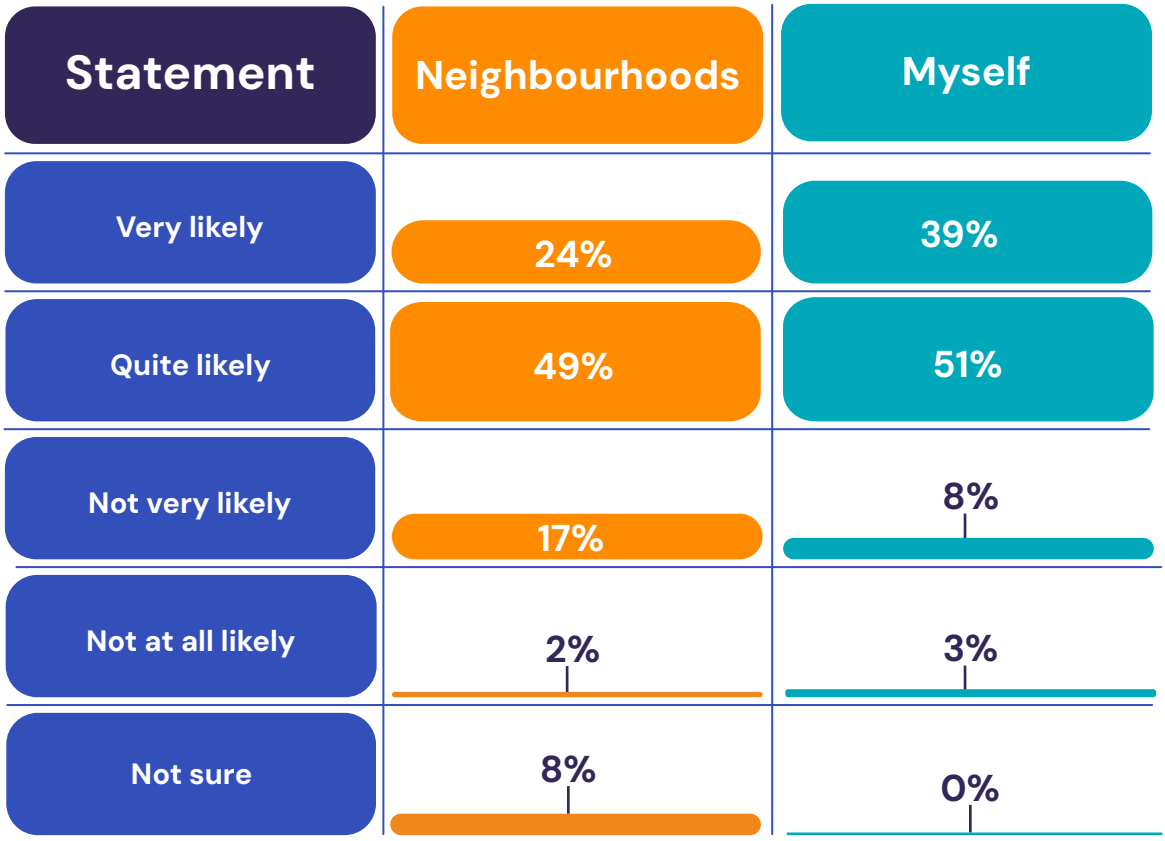
Statement	I would find this very encouraging	This is a little encouraging	This wouldn't encourage me	This would put me off
If it impacted me personally	63%	32%	5%	<1%
If it impacted people I know	70%	27%	3%	0%
If it impacted people I have never met	39%	50%	10%	1%
Knowing I would see results immediately	70%	26%	4%	0%
Knowing I would see results soon (e.g., in the next year)	64%	31%	5%	<1%
Knowing results will be gained in future, even if I don't see them now	31%	46%	19%	4%

This has implications for encouraging actions required to benefit the future, such as climate change. Whilst people are encouraged by knowing how their actions will help, this is far more the case if they themselves will experience this. For some people, simply knowing they will create change is enough, but others want to experience an exchange for their efforts.

Removing Barriers

Though barriers were considered to be largely similar across individuals and their neighbourhoods, they appear to be more pronounced for neighbours. Coupled with the likelihood of identifying others as being responsible for making change happen, this suggests that people tend to put the onus and fault on others. This is further shown by the fact that if barriers were removed, people feel that they are more likely to take action than their communities.

Fig 11. Perceived likelihood to make a change if barriers are removed



This indicates that whilst people feel others should take the first step in bringing change, they are also seen as more unwilling to do so. This could point to attribution biases, such as self-serving bias, where people place more positive emphasis on their own abilities and place blame for failures on external factors, such as other people or the wider system. They are likely to see their barriers as less and themselves more willing, but potentially limited by others.

That being said, even if barriers were removed, there is still 11% of people who feel that they are unlikely to make a change. Qualitative responses highlight barriers relating to a lack of confidence, persisting personal circumstance and responsibilities, and a lack of interest. With regards to the latter, in some instances this was a result of the perception that other people and services do not express interest in change, creating an 'if they don't care, why should I?' mindset. This further reinforces the importance of social proof and seeing others take action as a way to encourage individuals to do so themselves.

Final reflections

At the end of the survey, participants were once again asked to share their perspectives of change in Lincoln, to explore whether their perspectives had changed following questions prompting what change they would like to see, barriers to creating change, and ways of supporting them to take action.

Across the sample, agreement was higher at the end of the survey for four of the five statements. Agreement that respondents knew what change they wanted to see in Lincoln fell from 79% to 77%. These aggregate figures do not show how many individual respondents increased, decreased or maintained their agreement.

Fig 12. Agreement with statements before and after change-focused questions

Statement	Agree: Before change questions	Agree: After change questions	Difference
I would like for things to change in my day-to-day life	57%	69%	+12%
I know what change I would like to see in Lincoln	79%	77%	-2%
I feel I have a part to play in making change happen	60%	69%	+9%
I think there are steps I can take to make change happen	52%	60%	+8%
Meaningful change in 1-2 years feels realistic	57%	63%	+6%

This change after completing the change-focused questions indicates that structured reflection around avenues for change and who should create this may help them recognise what change they want to see and their role in this. Furthermore, reflecting on existing barriers, how they could be overcome, and the impact of doing so can further help change feel more realistically possible.

Going forwards, it is important that calls for action with regards to change not only show people what they can do and how they will benefit, but also empower them to reflect on what they want and can realistically do to contribute. This would help them identify what role they can take and how to do this, motivating them to get involved.

Behavioural insights

Behavioural insights go beyond the what of behaviours to understand the why, and subsequently how positive change can best be achieved. An overview of these is provided in the appendices across **pages 33 – 37.**

For this brief, the following behavioural insights were identified.

Don't just tell me, show me

The findings demonstrate Social Cognitive theory in action. Whether people invest in change is a combination of knowledge and confidence to do so (**personal factors**), the extent to which they receive feedback and positive outcomes (**behavioural factors**), opportunities to engage and seeing others take the lead so they can learn from and/or build upon these (**environmental factors**). The latter is particularly important when considering reciprocal determinism: they want to know that others are as invested in change as they are. When they see action from others, this encourages action from themselves.

Barriers are currently faced across these factors, limiting not only motivation to engage in change-making activities but also confidence to do so. People not only want to know what steps they could be taking, but also shown that they are not alone and others are also taking action.

I want to feel the benefit now

People are motivated by what they experience in the short-term, and the further away something seems, the less value people give it. This is known as **temporal discounting**, and has implications when encouraging people to invest in actions that create more long-term change. If people feel this will not benefit them, or will take too long to do so, then the **exchange** for their effort does not work for them, reducing their likelihood of action.

I'm willing despite my barriers; others aren't

Despite considering themselves and others to face similar barriers to change, when thinking about other people this is likely to also be characterised by an unwillingness to invest in change. This represents **attribution bias**, where people are more likely to attribute their own behaviours to external factors and the behaviour of others to personal factors. This perception of others' unwillingness creates a 'why should I?' mentality, where people are themselves reluctant to invest without commitment from others. This may contribute to the perception that others have more responsibility to take action, and further reinforces that seeing others take action is essential to building their own motivation to do so.

Insight to action

Following identification of the behavioural insights detailed in the previous section, we consulted frameworks such as the Behaviour Change Wheel to determine what interventions would be best suited to promote positive change. These recommendations take into account key findings and behavioural insights from across the research, in addition to learnings around what other initiatives have been effective or less so. Frameworks such as MINDSPACE and EAST have been further employed to help shape not only what the intervention should be, but also what this could look like and how it could be delivered. We have divided these into short-, medium-, and long-term goals to support in wider planning and strategy development.

These recommendations have been made based on available knowledge gained through the secondary and primary research, and may in some cases benefit from further research to refine these more. In particular, a Suitability, Feasibility, Acceptability (SFA) test of the recommendations would help inform your implementation strategy by highlighting those which are ready to be implemented now, and those which may require further work prior to this (e.g., to gain sufficient resource or interest). This is something Social Change always advocate, and can be achieved through various methods (e.g., internal review or external consultation).

The below recommendations were developed to support you in your mission for change. These are set out in three overarching steps.

Step 1: Create investment in change

Before enabling action, it is first important to strengthen people's investment and motivation to act. Encourage people to see change as realistic, worthwhile and something they could reasonably support by demonstrating the value of doing so and real-world examples of change in action.

Incentivisation

Benefits and exchange

Encourage people to see the value of supporting change by clearly showing how it will positively impact them in the immediate and short-to-medium term (Attractive). Show how this action would support local and individual challenges so they can see the benefit as directly relevant (Salience). This could be achieved by linking them with the areas people feel most impacted by – for example, setting up a local walking or running club to benefit both health and wellbeing, and social connection.

Persuasion

Prompt structured reflection to consider change

Use structured reflection as a tool to encourage people to consider what change they want to see in their area, existing opportunities to create this change, what their role could be in implementing this, and what would help them do so. This could be through community forums, newsletters or feedback requests similar to that of Lincoln Horizons in 2025. This approach would aim to not only encourage people to consider what change would be realistic to achieve, but also see how they could contribute, nudging them towards investing in doing so (Commitment).

Environmental Restructuring

Making local action visible

Make existing action and participation more visible by regularly showing individuals, communities and organisations contributing to change through local groups, events and initiatives. Demonstrating that others are willing to invest can provide reassurance that people will not be acting alone and help establish participation as an expected and normal part of community life (Norms). Over time, this could help shift perceptions from 'if others aren't, why should I?' towards 'if others would, why wouldn't I?'.

Modelling

Share case studies of effective action

Share case studies of people, communities and bodies who have taken action to provide examples that people can learn from and aspire towards. These can be across local organisations, public services, friends/neighbours, all working with local people to make change possible. The case studies should not only focus on the change that is happening, but how it began, what they did, who they worked with, what happened as a result and how this benefitted people and communities (Attractive). This will help people take inspiration from not only what they could do, but why they should, and the benefit they could experience (Attractive).

Step 2: Enable residents

Once people are invested in change, it is important to maintain momentum by ensuring that people feel able to contribute, both in terms of capabilities and opportunities. This could be achieved through supporting skills, signposting to existing provision and/or working with local organisations to put these in place.

Education

Share information on what action people can take

Based on areas people most want to see change, provide information on ways this can be achieved. Outline steps people can take, individually and with others, how to implement these, and opportunities to do so. Information should be made relevant to individuals and their local areas, (Salience), with actions broken down into simple, achievable steps so people perceive this as more realistic for them (Easy). Where relevant, show how these actions will contribute to the change people want to see so that their purpose and impact are clear (Attractive).

Environmental Restructuring

Establish a clear place to find opportunities

Make it easy for people to find opportunities by establishing a central hub or utilising existing, trusted local channels (Easy). This could include highlighting local events, groups and opportunities, trialling organisation of these by type of activity, audience and locality (Salient).

Where establishing a central hub is not possible, existing resource that could be utilised for outreach includes online media groups, posters and booklets in community hubs and conversations with community organisations. The Lincoln Independent could be a particularly valuable tool to support these conversations with its monthly directory of activities and events in Lincoln.

Show how opportunities can fit around people's lives

When sharing information about opportunities, be clear that there are different ways that people can contribute dependent on their personal circumstances (Salient, Attractive). Information should not only focus on what people can do, but also how much time is required, how often, where and when this takes place, and available support. It is important that there are different options available to suit different abilities and preferences, ranging from small informal contributions to more regular commitments.

Show how opportunities bring connection to others

Be sure to highlight opportunities that involve working alongside others, particularly local organisations, public services, friends, family and neighbours. This would not only align with people's preferences to engage in collective action, but also speak to belonging needs by providing social connection (Attractive, Social).

Training

Build confidence through skills development

For those who want to take a more active or leading role in change, provide or signpost to opportunities for people to upskill in areas that would help build knowledge and confidence with change-related activities. This could be related to leadership skills, project management, or setting up and running local initiatives. Prioritise free opportunities and present them as opportunities for personal development to help people work towards creating the change they want to see (Attractive).

Enablement

Provide practical support to remove barriers

Provide or signpost to practical support where time, cost and access barriers stop people from contributing to change. This could include financial support, venues or equipment, childcare support, or opportunities available at different times. This support would help alleviate current opportunity barriers, making it easier to participate (Easy). However, it is equally important that this support is easy to access and engage with in order to avoid disengagement from residents.

Connect people to potential partners

The findings suggest that some respondents aged 16-24 experience barriers relating to inclusion, local opportunities and infrastructure. Work directly with young people and with groups working with or led by young people to explore the opportunities they want and how these could be developed in ways that work for them. This could include activities designed with young people, opportunities to contribute to local decisions, and clear signposting to existing events, support and provision.

Create opportunities for community participation

Work with local groups and organisations establish and/or promote regular opportunities for residents to come together, connect, and contribute to change at different levels. This could include community forums and consultations between councils and communities to discuss local issues, the change they'd like to see and begin ideation of what actions they could change. Building from this, local planning sessions could provide opportunities for residents to bring their ideas forward and work with other residents, organisations or services who have expertise to support development of this idea further into an implementation-ready plan. These opportunities could also include local events or initiatives to improve the local area, such as a litter pick or planting.

Importantly, people should be able to contribute at different levels, whether it is simply attending, providing volunteering support by helping with refreshments or promoting the event online, or taking an active role in organising. These different options for involvement allow people to take part in a way that works best for them, and could further encourage them to be more involved in subsequent events (Salient; Commitment).

Beyond creating opportunities for contributing to change, these local events would also facilitate connections with other people and allow residents to see collective action taking place, reassuring them that they are not alone and further encouraging their investment in change (Social).

Develop targeted opportunities for young people

The findings highlighted that young people in particular feel barriers related to inclusion and infrastructure. Work with local groups, such as Lincoln Young Voices, to further explore what opportunities they would like to see and how these could be implemented in a way that works for them and is Attractive to them. As a first step, this could include implementing aforementioned opportunities specifically for the 16-24 age group, or signposting to events, support and provision.

Step 3: Showcase impact

To maintain investment in change, it is important that people are able to see how their efforts and contributions have made a difference. They need to receive feedback on the action they took or supported to know what impact it had, and encourage them to continue investing in future.

Enablement

Create a simple evaluation framework

Provide organisers with a simple framework to help them capture and demonstrate the impact of local action. Measures should be relevant, easy to collect and focus on tangible changes where possible (Easy, Attractive). For example, the number of people participating, resident/audience feedback, changes to a local space, or number of outputs delivered. Capturing this information would not only help organisers understand what has been achieved, but also provide evidence that can be used to show local communities how their contribution has made a difference.

Environmental Restructuring

Create a feedback loop

Build feedback in all community action, so participation does not simply end when people have engaged with an opportunity. Instead, it is important that residents receive feedback after their involvement so they know what impact they had, and what steps they could take next (Attractive Timely).

Organisers/groups should provide an initial update soon after the engagement to thank people for their involvement and highlight how this contributes to the change they want to see. Further updates can then be provided once evidence of outcomes has been obtained (e.g., through use of the framework) to again communicate how their contributions have supported local change. By being able to see how their contributions have made an impact, this will not only make them think that their efforts are worthwhile but also that meaningful change is possible, together encouraging continued investment and engagement in local action (Attractive).

Conclusion

The answer to the question “Is Lincoln Ready for Change?” is not a simple one. People want to see change and show some willingness to make this happen, but this does not always translate to action.

Whilst the majority of people in Lincoln have an idea of what change they want to see, they experience barriers related to knowledge and confidence, available resource and opportunities to work with others. They also want reassurance that they are not the only ones invested in this change. Seeing others take action is a key component in building confidence and motivation.

Support therefore needs to build capabilities and provide or signpost to available opportunities to empower individuals to recognise the role they can take in creating change, whilst strengthening local connections to support collective action, in-turn further motivating people to invest in change.

To learn more about LocalMotion and Social Change, please scan the QR Codes or click the links below:

LocalMotion website:

localmotion.org.uk/lincoln/

Social Change website:

social-change.co.uk

The BIG Lincoln Conversation 2023-2031

social-change.co.uk/work/the-big-lincoln-conversation

Appendices

Appendix A: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow, 1943

The hierarchy suggests that people have five categories of 'Needs': Physiological, Safety, Love, Esteem, and Self-Actualisation. Typically, once a Need has been sufficiently fulfilled, Needs higher up in the Hierarchy begin to emerge. For example, once someone feels personally secure, in good health and employment, with sufficient resources and property **(i.e., Safety Needs are fulfilled)**, then they will begin to look towards friendship, intimacy, family and connection **(Love and Belonging Needs emerge)**.

Fig 13. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Appendix B: The COM-B Model of Behaviour

Michie et al., 2011

The COM-B model proposes that there are three components to any **Behaviour (B): Capability (C), Opportunity (O) and Motivation (M).**

Fig 14. The COM-B Model of Behaviour

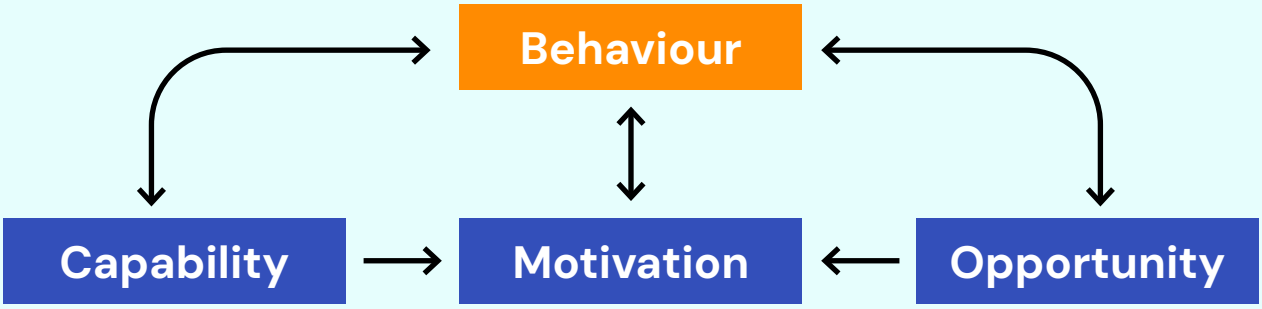


Table 1: The Components and Sub-components of the COM-B Model of Behaviour

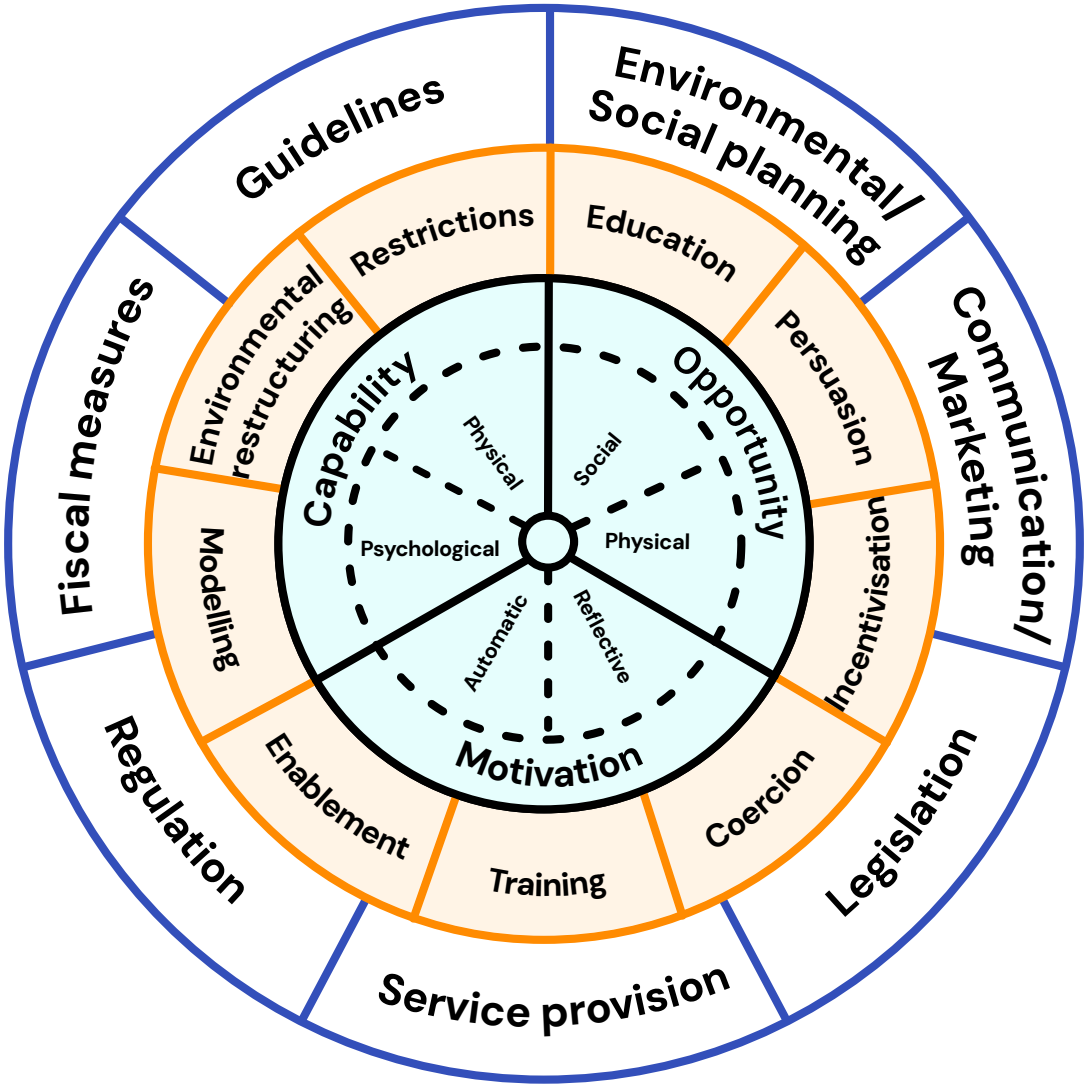
Component	Sub-component	Description
Capability	Physical	Our physical strength, skills or stamina
	Psychological	Our knowledge / psychological strength, skills or stamina
Opportunity	Physical	Opportunities provided by the environment, such as time, location and resources
	Social	Opportunities as a result of social factors, such as social norms and social cues
Motivation	Automatic	Automatic processes, such as our desires, impulses and inhibitions
	Reflective	Reflective processes, such as making plans and evaluating things that have already happened

Appendix C: the Behaviour Change Wheel

Michie et al., 2011

Once behaviour has been understood through research, the Behaviour Change Wheel **(BCW)** is an invaluable tool to help design and develop interventions that work. With COM-B components at its centre **(Capability, Opportunity, Motivation)**, the middle and outer circles of the BCW highlight a number of different interventions and delivery methods. For example, if a lack of information **(psychological capability)** is identified as a key issue, this can be solved through **education** via **communications and marketing**.

Fig 15. The Behaviour Change Wheel



Appendix D: MINDSPACE

Dolan et al., 2010

A mnemonic for nine influences on behaviour, the MINDSPACE framework aims to communicate the ways in which behaviour can be influenced and changed. Using it alongside the development of interventions for change will help to consider how it could best be framed and its opportunity for success maximised.

Table 2: Components of MINDSPACE

Principle	Description
Messenger	We are heavily influenced by who communicates information
Incentive	Our responses to incentives are shaped by predictable mental shortcuts such as strongly avoiding losses
Norms	We are strongly influenced by what others do
Default	We 'go with the flow' or pre-set options
Salience	Our attention is drawn to what is novel and seems relevant to us
Priming	Our acts are often influenced by sub-conscious cues
Affect	Our emotional associations can powerfully shape our actions
Commitment	We seek to be consistent with our public promises, and we reciprocate acts
Ego	We act in ways that make us feel better about ourselves

Appendix E: EAST

The Behavioural Insights Team, 2014

This framework is a shorter alternative to MINDSPACE, equally communicating how behaviour should be presented in order to encourage and enable people to engage in it. Considering how behaviour can be framed as easy, attractive, social and timely should be embedded in intervention development so that people are not only being enabled to engage in the behaviour, but also receive motivation to do so.

Table 3: Components of EAST

E	Easy	Make the desired behaviour easy to implement
A	Attractive	Grab people's attention to the behaviour and make it desirable to engage in
S	Social	People are influenced by others and are more likely to engage in a behaviour if many others are too or if they've made a public commitment
T	Timely	People are influenced by the timing of prompts and are more likely to change their habits if costs and benefits are felt immediately rather than later

Appendix F: Breakdown of survey sample

Table 4: Survey sample broken down by age

Response	Percentage
16-24	6%
25-34	14%
35-44	18%
45-54	19%
55-64	24%
65 and over	19%

Table 5: Survey sample broken down by gender

Response	Percentage
Men	32%
Women	62%
Non-Binary	3%
Prefer not to say / Did not answer	3%

Table 6: Survey sample broken down by postcode

Response	Percentage
LN1	25%
LN2	29%
LN3	2%
LN4	7%
LN5	12%
LN6	23%
Prefer not to say / did not answer	2%

Table 7: Survey sample broken down by ethnicity

Response	Percentage
Arab / Arab British	<1%
Asian / Asian British	1%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	1%
Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Groups	1%
White	92%
Prefer not to say / did not answer	5%

Table 8: Survey sample broken down by faith

Response	Percentage
Atheist	23%
Agnostic	15%
Buddhist	1%
Christian	37%
Hindu	1%
Jewish	<1%
Muslim	<1%
Sikh	0%
Other / Prefer not to say / Did not answer	23%

Table 9: Survey sample broken down by health/disability

Response	Percentage
Yes – I have a long-term health condition and/or disability	42%
No – I do not have a long-term health condition and/or disability	54%
Prefer not to say / did not answer	4%

Table 10: Survey sample broken down by relationship status

Response	Percentage
Single	21%
In a relationship	18%
Married	48%
Civil Partnership	1%
Divorced	4%
Separated	1%
Widowed	3%
Other	1%
Prefer not to say / did not answer	3%

Table 11: Survey sample broken down by housing/living status

Response	Percentage
I own my house	67%
I am renting	23%
I am living with parents	5%
Other	5%

Table 12: Survey sample broken down by income threshold

Response	Percentage
Up to £10,000	12%
£10,001 - £20,000	17%
£20,001 - £30,000	18%
£30,001 - £40,000	15%
£40,001 - £50,000	7%
£50,001 - £60,000	6%
£60,001 - £70,000	4%
£70,001 - £80,000	1%
£80,001 - £90,000	2%
£90,001 - £100,000	1%
Over £100,000	2%
Prefer not to say / did not answer	15%

Table 13: Survey sample broken down by employment status

Response	Percentage
In education	5%
Undergoing an apprenticeship	<1%
Part-time employed	15%
Full-time employed	35%
Self-Employed	9%
Retired	18%
Unemployed	2%
Unable to work due to health/disability	6%
Unable to work due to caring responsibilities	2%
None of the above	1%
Other	6%
Prefer not to say	1%

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