



COMPANION INVOLVEMENT TOOLKIT

Practical Guidance for
Emmaus Communities



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- Emmaus UK colleagues and SHIFT members who shared their expertise and provided guidance throughout the toolkit's development

Your contributions have ensured that this toolkit reflects genuine lived experiences and perspectives. This will help communities provide meaningful opportunities for involvement in all aspects of community life.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed to support Emmaus communities to embed meaningful companion involvement in a way that is practical, inclusive, and sustainable.

It is not intended to be read from cover to cover in one sitting. Different people will use it in different ways, depending on their role, their starting point, and what their community needs at the time.

Some readers may be new to companion involvement and want to understand what it means. Others may want practical guidance on how to improve current practice. Some may be looking for examples to discuss with companions, staff, trustees, or leadership teams. Others may want tools and templates to help them implement ideas locally.

**This toolkit can be used in several ways.
Communities may choose to:**

- read sections as a staff team and discuss what they mean locally
- use reflection questions in meetings with companions and staff
- identify one or two practical actions to test over a set period
- use case studies for learning and discussion
- revisit sections as involvement develops over time
- use the resource boxes at the end of each section to identify relevant tools

The toolkit is intended to support a process of development, not to provide a one-off checklist. Meaningful involvement takes time. It depends on trust, consistency, reflection, and shared commitment.

A note on language

At Emmaus, the term companion refers to individuals (both companions and residents) who live within Emmaus communities and receive support, accommodation, and opportunities for involvement and development.

This toolkit is structured as one document with different entry points.

The Getting Started Guide is the best place to begin if your community is at an early stage or wants a practical starting point.

PART 01

Sets out the foundations of companion involvement. It explains why involvement matters, the legal and quality context, the key principles that should guide practice, and the common challenges that communities may need to work through.

PART 02

Focuses on putting involvement into practice. It explores how companion involvement can be embedded across community life, social enterprise, service design, governance, peer roles, feedback processes, and decision-making.

PART 03

Brings the toolkit to life through real case studies and examples drawn from across the Emmaus federation. These examples show how involvement can work in practice, the difference it can make, and some of the tensions and challenges that may arise.

PART 04

Contains the practical resources, templates, and tools that support the guidance in Parts 1 and 2. These resources are designed to be adapted locally and used when needed. They are referenced throughout the toolkit so communities can easily identify which tools may help with a particular area of involvement.

A full list of resources is included in Part 4, with links to editable versions on EmmausNet.



GETTING STARTED GUIDE

Build a shared understanding

Start by creating a common understanding across staff, leadership, trustees, and companions.

Staff teams should talk together about what involvement means in practice and the changes it may bring. This includes reflecting on how involvement may affect roles, communication, decision-making, and everyday ways of working.

Leadership and trustees should be engaged early. Their support is essential if involvement is to be prioritised, resourced, and embedded in community culture rather than treated as an optional extra.

Companions should be introduced to involvement in a clear, honest, and accessible way. It can be helpful to explain that the community is beginning or strengthening an involvement journey together, and that opportunities such as meetings, feedback methods, project groups, or representative roles may develop over time.

Set expectations early. Everyone involved may make mistakes, and that is part of the process of learning, building trust, and developing more shared ways of working.

Useful resources for this section

Resource 1: Involvement Lead Role Description

Resource 24: Companion Representative Role Description

Start small and build over time

Communities are not expected to implement every element of involvement at once. Planned, manageable involvement is far more effective than trying to do too much too quickly.

In the early stages, communities may focus on meetings, one-to-one feedback, suggestion methods, and clear communication about how decisions are made.

As confidence and consistency develop, communities may begin to introduce co-design activities, service improvement groups, social enterprise leadership opportunities, or structured companion roles.

Over time, involvement may deepen further into governance, strategy, peer mentoring, external representation, and broader shared decision-making.

Progress will not be linear. Communities may move forward in some areas more quickly than others. What matters most is that involvement is genuine, consistent, and built on trust.

Useful resources for this section

Resource 2: Community Self-Assessment Tool

Resource 3: Involvement Planning Template

Resource 4: Setting Up Involvement Activities Checklist

This toolkit is designed to help communities embed meaningful companion involvement. To get the most from it, begin by building a shared understanding and taking small, practical steps.

Focus on quality, learning, and culture

Involvement is not only about structures or procedures. It depends on culture. Trust, patience, persistence, visibility, and follow-through are all essential.

Communities should:

- actively listen to companions and staff
- show what has changed as a result of feedback
- remain open to learning and adapting
- celebrate small successes
- support companions and staff to act as
- champions for involvement

Meaningful involvement takes time, patience, and commitment. By taking a thoughtful, shared, and reflective approach, communities can create participation that is genuine, sustainable, and empowering for all

Useful resources for this section

Resource 5: Companion Involvement Feedback Form

Resource 6: Involvement Activity Evaluation Form

Resource 7: Involvement Annual Review Form

Minimum involvement standard

Every community should aim to have the following in place:

- a regular opportunity for companions to meet and share views
- a clear feedback loop showing what has changed
- a named person responsible for supporting involvement opportunities for one-to-one feedback
- a Companion Representative, or equivalent role, or a clear plan to develop this
- a simple annual or periodic review of involvement

These provide a foundation for meaningful involvement. Without them, it is difficult to build consistency, accountability, or trust.

Useful resources for this section

Resource 1: Involvement Lead Role Description

Resource 7: Involvement Annual Review Form

Resource 8: Companion Meeting Terms of Reference

Resource 9: Companion Meeting Agenda Template

Resource 10: Companion Meeting Minutes Template

Resource 11: Rolling Action Log

Resource 14: "You Said / We Did / Together We've Done" Template

Resource 24: Companion Representative Role Description



PART 01:

FOUNDATIONS OF COMPANION INVOLVEMENT

1. Background

Legislation and standards shaping companion involvement

Companion involvement is not only good practice. It is an essential requirement for supported housing providers.

The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 introduces national standards designed to improve quality, accountability, and the influence of people living in supported housing. These standards make clear that companions must have real opportunities to shape their support and the communities they live in.

Two standards are especially relevant to this framework:

- The Empowerment standard requires communities to actively consult and involve companions in developing services and to ensure that their views, preferences, and experiences inform decisions.
- The Person-Centred Support standard requires every service to have a policy that sets out how companions will influence planning, delivery, and review of the support they receive.

These duties align closely with Emmaus values of solidarity, participation, and respect. They also align with the Government's National Plan to End Homelessness, published in December 2025, which highlights the importance of involving people with lived experience of homelessness in service design and delivery so that services improve outcomes and meet real need.

How the Emmaus Quality Standards support involvement

The Emmaus Quality Standards (EQS) reinforce these expectations and translate them into everyday practice. There is a standard that focuses specifically on companion involvement and requires communities to:

- provide clear and accessible communication about how to get involved
- offer regular structured opportunities for discussion
- involve companions actively in planning their own support
- create inclusive opportunities that reflect diverse needs and experiences

The EQS also highlights further areas of good practice, including:

- offering training and preparation for involvement roles
- providing more than one way to give feedback
- reviewing themes gathered through In-Form
- communicating outcomes clearly to companions, volunteers, and trustees involving companions in recruitment, induction, and governance where appropriate

Together, the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 and the EQS set a clear expectation that communities should work with companions rather than for them. This toolkit helps translate those expectations into practical, community-level activity.

Useful resources for this section

Model Companion Involvement Policy

Resource 2: Community Self-Assessment Tool

Resource 3: Involvement Planning Template



Learning from the federation

In late 2024, Companion Representatives requested that Emmaus UK undertake a federation-wide consultation to understand the current picture of companion involvement.

Executive leads, community leaders, and Companion Representatives self-assessed involvement across six areas using a scoring matrix from one to four. The findings showed a mixed picture. Many communities had strong foundations, but opportunities to influence and share decision-making varied significantly.

Common strengths included:

- regular companion meetings
- opportunities for companions to represent the community externally
- enterprise roles that build confidence and responsibility
- emerging models of peer support

Key development areas included:

- increasing companion involvement in governance frameworks
- expanding co-design beyond feedback into deeper levels of involvement
- strengthening peer advocacy and mentoring
- building leadership opportunities in social enterprise
- adopting more consistent evaluation tools across communities

This toolkit responds directly to those findings. It provides practical guidance, examples, and tools to support communities at different stages of their involvement journey.

2. Why Involvement Matters

Involvement gives companions a real say in the support they receive and in the running of the community and social enterprise. It enables people to share ideas, raise concerns, and shape decisions.

Effective involvement:

- improves decision-making
- builds trust, confidence, and ownership
- strengthens community culture
- supports recovery and wellbeing
- promotes learning and development
- helps services stay relevant, responsive, and accountable

For companions, this may mean feeling listened to, respected, and valued. It may support confidence, purpose, and belonging. It may also provide opportunities to develop skills, influence change, and take on new responsibilities.

For staff and teams, involvement can improve understanding of companion priorities, strengthen relationships, and ensure that services are informed by lived experience, rather than assumptions.

For the community, meaningful involvement can result in better-designed services, more inclusive decision-making, stronger accountability, and a healthier culture.

However, involvement only has this impact when it is genuine. If companions are asked for their views but do not see action, if consultation is too late to influence decisions, or if participation is limited to the same few voices, trust can be damaged. This is why the quality of involvement matters as much as the existence of involvement opportunities.





3. Principles for Involvement: Trauma-Informed, Strengths-Based, and Ethical Practice

Effective involvement relies on a shared set of principles that ensure companions feel respected, listened to, valued, and safe. In Emmaus communities, this means combining core involvement principles with trauma-informed and strengths-based approaches, alongside an ethical framework that prioritises doing no harm. These approaches are also consistent with the Emmaus Support, Development and Safety Toolkit, which underpins support work done with companions in Emmaus communities.

Safety and emotional wellbeing

Creating spaces where companions feel physically, psychologically, and emotionally safe is essential.

In practice, this may include:

- predictable processes and clear expectations
- calm, respectful meetings
- options to give feedback anonymously
- support for people who may find groups difficult
- responses that avoid blame and reduce anxiety
- collectively created group agreements
- optional check-in and check-out

Safety matters because it is the foundation of trauma-informed practice, a prerequisite for honest involvement, and a core ethical principle.

Trust, transparency, and honesty

Trust is built when decisions and processes are open, consistent, and explained clearly.

This means:

- telling people how decisions will be made
- being honest about what can and cannot change
- following through on actions
- avoiding misleading information or tokenistic engagement
- sharing outcomes in visible ways, such as “You Said / We Did / Together We’ve Done”

Ethical involvement requires honesty. Trust grows when companions can see that their contributions are genuinely considered.

Useful resources for this section

Resource 13: Decision Rights Charter

Resource 14: “You Said / We Did / Together We’ve Done” Template

Inclusion, equity, and accessibility

Everyone should be able to contribute regardless of background, ability, confidence, or experience.

This requires:

- flexible meeting formats
- easy read or translated materials where needed
- interpreters or additional support where appropriate
- varied participation options such as one-to-one, group, digital, and written methods
- awareness of cultural, gender-based, and historical barriers
- active efforts to ensure no one is excluded or disadvantaged

Inclusion is not just about offering opportunities. It is about making them genuinely accessible and safe.

Empowerment and shared power

Companions should be encouraged and supported to influence decisions, shape services, and take on responsibilities.

This may include:

- co-design groups
- Involvement in recruitment
- companion-led projects
- peer mentoring or advocacy roles
- opportunities for responsibility in social enterprise
- leadership and representation roles

Empowerment builds confidence, skills, and ownership. Ethical practice requires that responsibilities are shared fairly and that support is provided so participation is positive rather than overwhelming.

Collaboration and partnership

Staff, companions, and volunteers work together as partners with shared goals.

This may include:

- joint problem-solving
- shared planning of activities or improvements
- co-produced policies or procedures where appropriate
- involvement in governance
- recognising and addressing power dynamics

Collaboration shifts practice from doing things to or for people toward doing things with people.

Choice, control, and flexible participation

Companions should be able to choose how and when they take part and have control over how their views are heard.

This means:

- participation is voluntary
- multiple engagement methods are offered
- people can step in and out of involvement roles
- “not now” is respected without judgement
- approaches are adapted based on individual needs
- companions can choose not to speak

Choice is both empowering and protective. It allows involvement to happen at a pace that is manageable and safe.



Recognising strengths and lived experience

Companions' knowledge, skills, and insight should be valued as expertise.

This may include:

- companion-led learning or mentoring
- identifying personal strengths and interests
- celebrating contributions and achievements
- using lived experience to shape service improvement

Strengths-based practice builds confidence and reinforces the value of contribution.

Useful resources for this section

Resource 19: Certificate of Involvement
Resource 20: Template Reference Letter

Reflection, learning, and continuous improvement

Communities learn from successes and challenges, review involvement activities, and improve over time.

This may involve:

- routine evaluation of involvement activities
- annual community review
- themed learning from In-Form data
- sharing learning across the federation

Reflection is essential for embedding good practice, avoiding tokenism, and sustaining improvement.

Useful resources for this section

Resource 5: Companion Involvement Feedback Form
Resource 6: Involvement Activity Evaluation Form
Resource 7: Involvement Annual Review Form

4. Core Structures for Meaningful Involvement

Meaningful involvement depends on clear structures that support consistent and transparent working.



Committing to involvement: adopting a policy

A clear policy sets expectations, roles, and processes for involvement and helps embed it in everyday practice. The Model Companion Involvement Policy can be adapted to meet local needs.



Clear decision-making boundaries

It should be clear what companions can influence, what they can help decide, and where decisions must sit elsewhere due to legal, safeguarding, or governance responsibilities. This helps build trust and reduce tokenistic involvement. The Decision Rights Charter (Resource 13) can support this.



Introducing an Involvement Lead

Communities are encouraged to identify an Involvement Lead. This may be a nominated staff member or a rotating role. The role may include organising involvement activity, gathering and sharing feedback, and supporting inclusive participation and follow-through. The Involvement Lead Role Description (Resource 1) can support this.



Feedback and accountability

Companions need to see how their views have been considered and what has changed as a result. Without visible follow-through, involvement can feel symbolic rather than real.



Clear routes for involvement

Companions need clear and consistent opportunities to take part, including meetings, one-to-one conversations, and feedback methods. Offering more than one route helps ensure involvement is accessible and inclusive. Further detail is provided in Part 2.



Review and learning

Communities need simple ways to review whether involvement is working and how it can improve over time.

These structures create the foundation for meaningful involvement. Once they are in place, communities can begin to think about how involvement can develop and deepen over time.

5. The Spectrum of Involvement

Building on these foundations, involvement can be understood as a spectrum, with increasing levels of shared influence between companions, staff, and leaders.

At one end, involvement may focus on:

- informing companions about decisions
- consulting on ideas or proposed changes

As involvement develops, it may move towards:

- involving companions in shaping ideas
- collaborating on decisions and improvements
- co-producing services, activities, or ways of working

Different approaches are appropriate at different times. Not every decision requires co-production, and not all companions will want the same level of involvement.

It is important not to move too quickly to higher levels of involvement without building trust, confidence, and consistency first. Without this foundation, involvement can feel tokenistic or unclear.

Communities are encouraged to develop involvement gradually, recognising that progress will vary across different areas of community life.

Further guidance on how to apply this in practice is provided in Part 2.

INFORM

Telling

Here is the information you need to know. This is what is happening.

EDUCATE

Explaining

This is what is happening and why. Do you understand?

CONSULT

Asking

This is what is happening and why. Do you agree or disagree?

ENGAGE

Involving

This is what might happen. What do you think about it?

CO-DESIGN

Empowering

This is what we want to achieve. How should we go about it?

CO-PRODUCE

Collaborating

What are the biggest priorities and how can we work together to achieve them?

6. Challenges and Barriers to Involvement

Involvement is often rewarding and transformative, but it also brings real challenges. These are not signs of failure. They are a natural part of sharing decision-making.

Power imbalances

Power imbalances exist in every supported housing setting. Staff hold institutional authority, access to information, and responsibility for safeguarding and decision-making. Companions may have experienced systems where their voice had little impact.

Common signs include:

- companions feeling unable to disagree with staff
- decisions being made before companions are consulted
- meetings dominated by jargon or professional assumptions
- fear of negative consequences for speaking up
- staff unintentionally guiding the outcome

If power imbalances are not acknowledged and managed carefully, involvement can become symbolic rather than real.

Perceived alignment with staff and loss of peer trust

Companions who take on representative or involvement roles maybe viewed by others as too close to staff or as part of the system rather than part of the companion group.

This can happen because of:

- past experiences where people in authority misused information or power
- fear that speaking openly could lead to negative consequences
- lack of clarity about what representatives do and do not share
- dual roles without enough support

- weak feedback loops to the wider companion group

If this is not addressed, representatives may feel isolated, other companions may disengage, and involvement may lose credibility.

What helps reduce this barrier includes:

- clear role descriptions
- strong confidentiality agreements in plain language
- collective rather than individual representation
- visible feedback loops
- companion-only spaces
- active staff support that protects representatives from being positioned as messengers without power

Differing expectations

Companions and staff may have different assumptions about:

- what will be decided
- who holds final responsibility
- what resources are available
- how quickly change will happen
- the purpose of involvement

When expectations do not match, companions may feel unheard, and staff may feel frustrated or overloaded. Clear communication about scope, purpose, and limitations is essential.

Limited capacity and resources

Practical limitations such as time, staffing, funding, training, and routine can affect involvement. This may result in involvement becoming reactive or irregular, making it hard to build trust or momentum. Even so, small but consistent actions can create the foundation for stronger and more sustainable involvement over time.

8. What Good Involvement Looks Like

It is not always easy to measure involvement, but there are clear signs that it is working well. In communities where involvement is meaningful:

- companions raise ideas without always being prompted
- feedback leads to visible and communicated change
- a range of voices are heard, not only the most confident
- companions understand how decisions are made
- disagreements can be discussed safely
- companions take on roles and responsibilities over time
- trust grows gradually
- people feel listened to, respected, and included

These signs may develop slowly, and consistency is more important than speed.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Where do companions currently influence decisions in our community?

Where are decisions made without companion input?

Do companions understand how decisions are made?

What might stop someone from speaking openly here?

What would need to change for involvement to feel safer or more meaningful?

7. Supporting Engagement and Building Trust

Some companions may be unsure about getting involved. Confidence grows gradually and depends on a predictable and respectful environment.

Readiness, confidence, and non-linear engagement

Not everyone will feel ready to participate. This may be because involvement:

- feels unfamiliar or unclear
- triggers anxiety
- brings back memories of previous negative systems
- requires confidence speaking in groups
- feels risky because of power differences
- happens during a difficult period in someone's life

Choosing not to engage does not indicate a lack of interest. It often reflects a need for greater safety, trust, or time.

Common reasons people may hesitate include:

- feeling they do not have the right skills
- worry about being judged or dismissed
- fear of conflict or blame
- concerns about confidentiality or repercussions
- feeling that their voice will not make a difference
- finding group settings overwhelming
- not understanding the purpose of involvement
- cultural, language, or communication barriers

Good practice for staff

To build trust and support involvement, staff should:

- be patient and avoid pressure
- build trust through everyday conversations
- explain involvement clearly and simply
- offer different participation options
- acknowledge power differences openly
- create predictable and calm meeting spaces
- be transparent about what can and cannot change
- provide positive reinforcement
- check in after meetings or activities
- accept that some companions may not engage
- acknowledge that some companions will need significant time or support

A trusting system

Trust is not created only through individual relationships. It also depends on the wider structure and culture of the community.

A trusting system includes:

- clear and consistent processes
- visible follow-up
- shared accountability for agreed actions
- accessible notes and action logs
- regular learning and reflection
- fair opportunities for all companions to contribute

When these systems are in place, companions are more likely to feel that their voice matters even as staff teams or circumstances change.



PART 02:

**PUTTING COMPANION
INVOLVEMENT
INTO PRACTICE**

1. Introduction

Part 1 set out the principles, structures, and common challenges that shape meaningful involvement. This section focuses on how those foundations can be put into practice in everyday community life.

Involvement is not a single activity or role. It takes place in many ways, both formal and informal, including meetings, one-to-one conversations, social enterprise, service design, governance, and peer support.

As outlined in Part 1, involvement does not feel neutral for everyone. For some companions, it may feel unfamiliar, risky, or emotionally difficult, shaped by past experiences or uncertainty about whether speaking up will make a difference. For staff, it can involve sharing influence, managing expectations, and responding to challenge

Because of this, effective involvement depends not only on having structures in place, but on how those structures are introduced, facilitated, and followed through in practice.

2. Moving from Principles to Practice

Putting involvement into practice begins with a shared understanding and a realistic approach.

Staff teams should take time to discuss what involvement means in practice and how it may affect everyday roles, communication, and decision-making.

Leadership and trustees should be engaged early so that involvement is supported, prioritised, and embedded within organisational culture.

Companions should be introduced to involvement in a clear and accessible way. It should be explained that the community is developing or strengthening its approach and that opportunities to participate may take different forms and grow over time.

It is also important to set expectations. Involvement is a learning process. Mistakes will happen. Trust develops gradually. Being open about this helps create a more honest and constructive environment.

Useful resources for this section

Resource 2: Community Self-Assessment Tool

Resource 3: Involvement Planning Template

Resource 4: Setting Up Involvement Activities Checklist



3. Sharing Views, Ideas, and Feedback

Creating opportunities for companions to share their views is often the starting point for involvement. However, simply providing opportunities does not guarantee that people will feel able to use them.

As outlined in Part 1, companions may not always feel ready to participate or may choose not to speak for many reasons. Because of this, communities need to think not only about how feedback is gathered, but whether companions feel safe, confident, and supported enough to give it.

The following approaches support safe and meaningful engagement in practice.

Forums and meetings

Regular meetings can provide a structured space for companions to discuss ideas, raise concerns, and suggest changes. These may be companion-only meetings or mixed companion and staff meetings.

When meetings work well, they can support shared discussion, collective problem-solving, and visible decision-making. When they do not, they can reinforce power imbalances or exclude quieter voices.

Meetings are more likely to be effective when they are:

- regular and predictable
- clearly structured
- facilitated respectfully
- supported by simple agendas and notes
- based on agreed group expectations
- open to different ways of contributing
- include optional check-in and check-out to support emotional safety

It is important to recognise that not everyone will speak in meetings, and that silence does not necessarily mean agreement. Therefore, meetings should not be the only route for involvement.

Surveys and suggestion boxes

Written or digital methods can provide another route for feedback, including anonymous input.

These may include:

- short companion surveys
- suggestion boxes
- written feedback slips
- anonymous online forms

These methods can be particularly useful when exploring sensitive issues or when some companions feel more comfortable sharing views privately.

One-to-one discussions

One-to-one conversations are often where the most honest and reflective feedback emerges. These conversations can allow companions to speak more openly about their experience, concerns, or ideas. They are especially important for companions who may not engage in groups.

However, this also creates responsibility. Communities need to ensure that views shared one-to-one are appropriately recorded, fed into wider learning, and not lost because they happened informally.

Digital platforms

Online spaces may be useful for some communities, particularly where companions are comfortable using digital tools.

These may include:

- group chats
- digital noticeboards
- online surveys
- shared polling tools

Digital methods can widen participation for some people, but they should never replace non-digital options.

Informal and everyday feedback

Some of the most important involvement happens informally. Everyday conversations, spontaneous comments, check-ins, and day-to-day observations can all provide valuable feedback and insight.

These informal routes can help build trust, but they should complement, not replace, structured opportunities. Without clear processes, there is a risk that informal feedback is not captured, acted upon, or communicated back.

What makes this meaningful

The method used matters less than what happens afterwards.

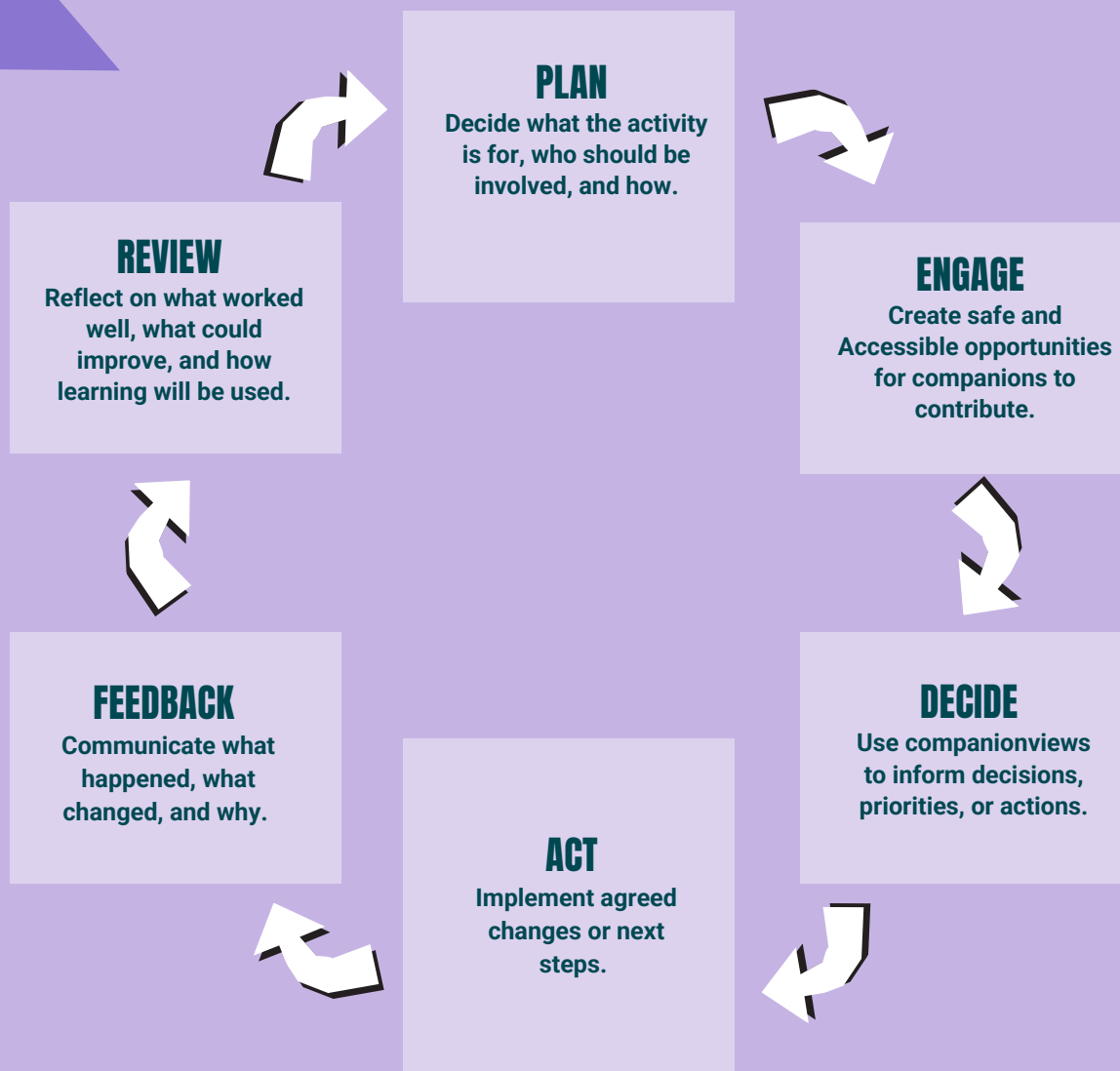
Involvement becomes meaningful when:

- feedback is listened to
- decisions are influenced
- actions are taken where possible
- outcomes are communicated clearly
- people can see that their input has made a difference

Without structure, meetings can become unclear, inconsistent, or dominated by a small number of voices. Simple tools help ensure that meetings are purposeful, inclusive, and lead to clear actions and follow-up.

Useful resources for this section

- Resource 5:** Companion Involvement Feedback Form
- Resource 8:** Companion Meeting Terms of Reference
- Resource 9:** Companion Meeting Agenda Template
- Resource 10:** Companion Meeting Minutes Template
- Resource 11:** Rolling Action Log
- Resource 12:** Companion and Staff Meeting Facilitation Checklist



4. The Involvement Cycle

To make involvement meaningful, communities can use a clear cycle that shows how companions' voices lead to action.

The cycle helps everyone understand:

- how to share feedback safely and confidently
- how staff and leaders use that feedback
- how changes are implemented and communicated
- how involvement is reviewed and improved

Without the final steps of feedback and review, involvement can feel incomplete or symbolic.

Using simple tools helps make the involvement cycle visible and consistent, ensuring that activities are planned clearly, reviewed properly, and lead to learning and improvement over time.

Useful resources for this section

Resource 3: Involvement Planning Template

Resource 6: Involvement Activity Evaluation Form

Resource 7: Involvement Annual Review Form

5. Inclusion and Accessibility in Practice

Inclusion requires more than offering opportunities. It requires understanding and addressing the barriers that may prevent people from taking part.

Barriers may be connected to:

- neurodiversity
- literacy or English as an additional language
- mental health
- digital exclusion
- physical accessibility
- previous experiences of services or authority
- confidence, processing style, or communication preferences

Communities should therefore consider a range of practical adjustments.

- For neurodiverse companions, this may include clear structure, visual supports, quieter spaces, and extra time to process and respond.

- For people with lower literacy or different language needs, it may include plain language, verbal options, or translated materials where possible.
- For companions affected by mental health barriers, trauma-informed facilitation, one-to-one alternatives, and flexibility may be particularly important.
- For those affected by digital exclusion, non-digital routes should always be available.
- For physical accessibility, spaces and methods should be adapted where needed.

It is also important to recognise that some companions may still choose not to engage. This should be respected. The aim is not to force participation, but to ensure fair and accessible opportunities.

The aim of inclusion and accessibility is not to make everyone participate in the same way. The goal is to create conditions where everyone has a fair opportunity to engage in a way that works for them.



6. Involvement in Social Enterprise

Social enterprise is central to the Emmaus model and offers meaningful opportunities for companions to learn, contribute, and influence outcomes.

It can also be a space where involvement is experienced not as consultation but as responsibility, participation, and development.

Operational roles and skill-building

Companions may work across different parts of the enterprise, such as customer service, logistics, retail, catering, marketing, or recycling. These roles can build practical experience, confidence, and transferable skills.

To support this well, communities should provide:

- clear role descriptions
- structured induction
- training and development opportunities
- ongoing guidance and support

Decision-making and strategic contribution

Companions can also contribute to how enterprise work is run and developed.

This may include:

- suggesting improvements to operations
- helping identify practical challenges
- contributing ideas for new products, services, or initiatives
- leading projects or campaigns

This type of involvement can be highly empowering, but it requires clarity about decision-making, expectations, and support.

Leadership and enterprise development

Some companions may take on leadership roles or develop their own enterprise-led projects. This can support confidence, identity, and progression, but it also introduces additional responsibility and pressure. Leadership opportunities should be developed in ways that are supportive and realistic, with clear boundaries and staff support.

Involvement in social enterprise is not only about labour or contribution to income generation. It can provide companions with purpose, structure, confidence, recognition, and a sense of ownership. It can also create opportunities for companions' strengths and creativity to shape the life and identity of the community.

7. Involvement in Decision-Making and Governance

Companion involvement in decision-making is central to creating communities where companions actively shape how the community runs.

This can happen through formal structures and everyday practices.

Companion involvement policy

Companions should be involved in creating, implementing, and reviewing the Companion Involvement Policy so that it reflects real perspectives and local practice.

This policy should be supported at Board level to demonstrate that involvement is a genuine organisational commitment.

Governance practices

Communities can strengthen companion involvement in governance by:

- including companion involvement as a standing agenda item at Board meetings
- creating opportunities for companions to feed directly into Board discussions
- sharing Board reports or summaries in accessible formats
- inviting companions to attend relevant parts of Board or annual meetings where appropriate
- appointing a trustee with responsibility for companion engagement
- creating sub-groups or advisory roles that connect companions to governance structures

Representation and boundaries

It may not always be appropriate for a current companion to take on a full trustee role, due to safeguarding, power dynamics, or legal responsibilities.

Communities may instead consider:

- former companions
- people with lived experience relevant to companion issues
- non-trustee companion advisors attending specific agenda items

What matters is that lived experience influences governance in a way that is meaningful and appropriately supported. The Designated Trustee for Companion Involvement Role Description (Resource 15) can support communities to identify the right person for this role.

Companion representation in decision-making groups

Companions can sit on committees or subgroups that help shape priorities, operations, and development plans, including areas of operations, finance, and strategy. Their experience brings valuable insight into what works well and what could be improved.

Participation in solidarity committees

Many communities operate committees focused on solidarity work. Companion involvement ensures that decisions about giving, campaigning, or supporting others reflect shared community values and lived experience.



Involvement in recruitment and induction

Companions can contribute to staff recruitment by joining interview panels, giving tours to candidates, or helping assess values and community fit. Trustee induction can include meeting with companions to build relationships and ensure trustees have a good understanding of companion issues and priorities.

Participation in strategic planning

Companions can contribute to strategic development by providing:

- Demographic and needs-based data
- KPIs and community insights
- Awareness of external trends (e.g., digital exclusion, mental health prevalence, changes in welfare systems and regulations)

They can also be involved in strategic planning by supporting with:

- Undertaking a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) analysis
- Reviewing and providing feedback throughout strategic planning on associated documents

This ensures policies, services, and physical environments reflect actual and anticipated needs.

Participation in evaluations or audits

Companions can be involved in internal reviews, quality audits, or assessments against Emmaus Quality Standards, providing a lived-experience perspective on what is working and what needs improvement.

These approaches embed companion voice into the structures that shape community life. They strengthen accountability, improve relevance, and ensure that decisions are informed by those who live with their impact.

8. Service Design and Delivery

In the context of Emmaus, involvement in service design and delivery means involving companions directly in shaping how community life, work, support, and shared spaces are organised and improved.

This recognises companions as experts by experience and ensures that services are realistic, person-centred, and community-led.

Planning and decision-making

Companions can be involved in:

- advisory groups
- project groups
- service development workshops
- policy and process review
- planning improvements to support or communal routines

These approaches allow companions to contribute before decisions are fixed, rather than only offering views afterwards.

Delivery and co-delivery

Companions can also take active roles in delivering elements of community life, such as:

Companions can also take active roles in delivering elements of community life, such as:

- co-facilitating sessions or workshops
 - supporting induction
 - helping lead activities
 - contributing to peer-led support or wellbeing sessions
-

Environment and communal spaces

Companions should be involved in shaping their environment, including:

Companions should be involved in shaping their environment, including:

- shared spaces
- gardens
- maintenance priorities
- proposals affecting communal areas

This strengthens ownership and helps ensure that shared environments reflect actual needs and preferences.

Community engagement and external advocacy

Companions may also represent the community externally, help shape campaigns, or support community events and partnerships.

Involvement in service design moves participation beyond consultation into shared creation. It can build confidence, ownership, and better-quality services, while ensuring that community life is shaped by those who live it.

9. Peer Mentoring and Peer Advocacy

Peer mentoring and peer advocacy are important elements of involvement in Emmaus communities. They build on lived experience, solidarity, and mutual support.

Peer mentoring

Peer mentoring involves companions offering structured support to others, especially those who are new or facing specific challenges.

This may include:

- helping new companions settle into the community
- sharing information and encouragement
- supporting move-on planning
- co-facilitating inductions or workshops

Peer mentoring can build confidence and leadership for mentors, while also strengthening support and belonging for others.

Peer advocacy

Peer advocacy enables companions to speak up for themselves and others and to ensure that views are represented in decisions affecting community life and wellbeing.

This may include:

- helping someone prepare for a meeting
- supporting someone to raise a concern
- representing themes from peer discussion
- helping ensure that quieter voices are heard

Support, boundaries, and supervision

Peer roles require:

- clear expectations and boundaries
- guidance on confidentiality
- named staff support
- opportunities for reflection and supervision
- recognition and celebration of contribution

Without this, there is a risk of emotional burden, confusion, or burnout.

Peer roles can reduce isolation, strengthen trust, and help embed lived experience into decision-making. They are also a practical way of developing confidence, leadership, and shared responsibility.

Peer roles work best when expectations, boundaries, and support are clear. Structured tools help ensure that peer mentoring and advocacy are safe, consistent, and positive for everyone involved.

Useful resources for this section

Resource 16: Peer Mentoring Role Description

Resource 17: Peer Mentoring Agreement

Resource 18: Peer Mentoring Log / Reflective Journal

Suggested peer mentoring qualifications (see Further Resources section)

10. Conflict Resolution, Safeguarding, and Managing Challenges

Ensuring that involvement is safe, respectful, and constructive is essential.

Involvement can surface disagreement, frustration, unmet expectations, or tension. This is not necessarily a problem. It is often part of sharing influence and making space for honest discussion. What matters is how these situations are managed.

Conflict resolution

Communities should:

- set clear ground rules for meetings and activities
- use trained facilitators where appropriate
- provide ways to raise and resolve disagreement early
- offer one-to-one support when needed
- support respectful discussion without blame or escalation

Safeguarding

Companions and staff should understand how to identify, report, and respond to safeguarding concerns. This is especially important where companions take on mentoring, advocacy, representative, or leadership roles.

Communities should ensure:

- clear reporting processes
- understanding of confidentiality and its limits
- clear boundaries for roles
- regular supervision and reflective support
- records are kept appropriately and sensitively

Managing challenge in practice

When involvement is working well, it may bring challenge into the open more visibly. This includes disagreement, critique, or frustration.

Communities should not treat this as evidence that involvement is failing. Instead, it may be evidence that people feel able to speak more honestly.

The aim is not to remove challenge, but to create safe and accountable ways of handling it.



11. Ways to Get Involved with Emmaus UK and the Wider federation

Companions also have opportunities to shape the work of Emmaus UK and influence decisions across the wider federation.

This may include involvement in:

- governance and strategic planning
- research and consultation
- workshops and national projects
- the Companion Committee
- the federation Committee
- community representation roles

The Companion Committee

The Companion Committee brings together representatives from across the federation to ensure companion perspectives shape Emmaus UK's work.

It provides opportunities for:

- representation
- shared discussion across communities
- leadership roles such as Chair or Vice-Chair
- learning and development
- voting and influence on federation matters

Useful resources for this section

Resource 21: Companion Committee Chair and Vice Chair Roles

Resource 22: Companion Committee Federation Committee Representative

Resource 23: Companion Committee Terms of Reference

Resource 24: Companion Representative Role Description

Companion representative roles in communities

Being a representative within a community is an important way for companions to influence both local and federation-wide work.

This may include:

- organising meetings
- representing views to staff or trustees
- supporting events or solidarity activity
- helping new companions understand Emmaus
- linking local and federation learning

These opportunities strengthen companion voice, leadership, and influence beyond the local community and help ensure that national decisions reflect real lived experience.

Clear role descriptions and structures help ensure that representation is meaningful, supported, and connected to wider decision-making, rather than symbolic or unclear.

12. Recognition and Reward for Involvement

Recognising and valuing companion contribution supports confidence, motivation, and development.

Recognition should be proportionate, meaningful, and linked to real contribution. It may include:

- certificates
- volunteering or experience logs
- skills mapping
- references
- celebration in newsletters or community updates
- recognition from trustees or leadership
- small, proportionate tokens of appreciation where appropriate, such as vouchers or reimbursements

Any financial or material recognition should be used carefully, with clear guidance, and in a way that is fair, transparent, and consistent with benefits, safeguarding, and organisational policies.

Recognition helps reinforce that involvement is valued and can support future opportunities in employment, volunteering, education, or leadership.

Useful resources for this section

Resource 19: Certificate of Involvement

Resource 20: Template Reference Letter



13. Recording Impact and Evaluating Involvement

Recording involvement activities on In-Form

To support consistency, transparency, and accountability, involvement activities should be logged on In-Form.

Recording involvement helps communities:

- demonstrate compliance with standards
- evidence how feedback leads to action
- monitor levels and types of participation
- identify themes and areas for development
- share learning and good practice

Communities may record:

- type of activity
- date and participants
- purpose and topic
- key feedback or outcomes
- follow-up actions
- evaluation or reflection

Entries may be logged in Sessions for group activity or as Actions where relevant to one-to-one work.

Useful resources for this section

Resource 6: Involvement Activity Evaluation Form

Resource 7: Involvement Annual Review Form

Resource 11: Rolling Action Log

Evaluating impact

Evaluation does not need to be overly formal. At its heart, it is about listening, reflecting, and using what is learned to improve. Involvement may lead to impact for companions, staff, and the wider community.

For companions, this may include feeling listened to, increased confidence, stronger relationships, or improved wellbeing.

For staff and teams, it may include deeper understanding of companion priorities, stronger co-production, and improved services.

For communities and organisations, it may include better-designed services, stronger accountability, and more inclusive decision-making.

Useful questions include:

- did companions feel listened to and respected?
- what did people gain from taking part?
- what worked well and what could improve?
- what changed as a result?

Learning from involvement should feed into planning, reviews, and ongoing development. Capturing and reviewing involvement helps ensure that learning is not lost, actions are followed through, and communities remain accountable for what has been agreed.

14. What Good Involvement Looks Like in Practice

In practice, involvement is working well when you can see the following happening day to day:

- companions initiating ideas or raising issues
- more open and confident discussion
- increased participation from a wider range of companions
- stronger links between feedback and decisions
- companions taking on roles and responsibilities
- clearer communication about decisions and outcomes
- more trust in meetings and feedback processes

These signs may be gradual. The important point is not perfection, but steady movement toward more genuine, inclusive, and visible involvement.

Using this toolkit for training and team development

This toolkit can be used as a training and reflection resource.

Teams may choose to:

- work through sections together
- use reflection questions in team or community discussions
- discuss case studies and compare them to local practice
- identify small actions to test and review

Involvement develops through practice, reflection, and shared learning.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Are we offering more than one way for companions to share views?

How do we know quieter voices are being heard?

Can companions see what has changed because of their input?

Are we clear about what companions can and cannot influence?

Are we relying too heavily on a small number of companions?

What is one thing we could improve in the next month?



PART 03:

**COMPANION
INVOLVEMENT -
CASE STUDIES AND
REAL EXAMPLES**

This section brings companion involvement to life through real examples from across the Emmaus federation.

Part 1 sets out the principles. Part 2 explains how involvement works in practice. This section shows what that looks like in reality.

The case studies reflect the voices, experiences, and insights of companions themselves. They show how involvement feels, the difference it can make, and some of the challenges and tensions that can come with it.

They are not intended to be models to copy directly. Every community is different. Instead, they are designed to provide insight, support reflection and discussion, and illustrate how involvement can develop in different ways over time.



1. Case Study:

CHRISTIAN

Creativity, Purpose, and Involvement in Action

Christian arrived at Sussex Emmaus looking for stability, support, and a chance to rebuild. What he found was also an opportunity to rediscover his creativity and turn it into something with purpose. Today, Christian runs his own upcycled lighting workshop within the community, an example of how involvement can transform individual interests into shared value for both the companion and the organisation.

Every light I create is different. I love the joy of people appreciating what I've made.

- Christian



I love the fact that in my workshop, I can hear customers talking positively about my items.

Finding purpose through creativity

Christian expresses himself through the creation of upcycled lights, using scrap metal, discarded objects, and donated materials from the Emmaus site. With access to a workshop and the freedom to experiment, he combines creativity with practical skills such as electrical testing, wiring, pricing, and learning how to run a small enterprise.

He balances this work with responsibilities on the community van and other roles. When deadlines or commissions arise, he often stays beyond his normal hours to complete a project, driven not because he is asked to, but because he feels pride in what he is making.

Abuzz from making and sharing

The impact of Christian's work is visible across the community.

He has developed a loyal customer base, and one customer has purchased several of his lights. He also takes commissions, reinforcing the sense that his craft has real value.

Opportunities have extended beyond Emmaus. His lights are being sold in shops across Brighton, including Jules Emporium. This partnership began when staff reached out and created opportunities to showcase his work more widely. Support staff have also helped him explore additional retail outlets.

Being believed in... seeing my items in exhibitions... having the support from the CEO, social enterprise staff - everyone has pushed and supported my project.

For Christian, the value of his work is not only in the sales. What matters most is that each item becomes a conversation starter about Emmaus and its work. When his pieces appear in local shops or exhibitions, they carry the Emmaus story with them: stories of rebuilding, community, and second chances.

Involvement in practice

Christian's journey demonstrates several key elements of involvement.

He has ownership and agency. He defines his own goals. He wants to build a future around creative upcycling, and staff work with him rather than directing him.

He has access to opportunity. The Emmaus environment provides materials, space, and active encouragement to experiment, learn, and feel a sense of purpose.

He values peer support and advocacy. He recognises that some companions may struggle to speak to staff and may need a peer alongside them.

“Some people can't talk to staff easily... sometimes it would be good to go into support with them and advocate for those who find it difficult to talk openly.”

He experiences recognition and belief. Seeing his work valued, exhibited, and sold has reinforced his confidence and sense of identity.

He also connects strongly to the Emmaus ethos.

“You need a purpose, a goal, going to work... the support is there. You've got to grasp it.”

For Christian, Emmaus is not only a place of support. It is a place where he has been able to develop, contribute, and be recognised for what he can do.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What opportunities exist in your community for companions to explore interests or strengths?

How do you support companions to develop ideas into something meaningful?

Are there ways to better recognise and celebrate contributions?



2. Case Study: Co-Creating Emmaus Norfolk & Waveney's Three-Year Strategy

As Emmaus Norfolk & Waveney prepared its next three-year strategy in 2025, leaders recognised the need for direct companion insight and committed to a consultation involving companions, staff, and trustees.

Aims

The process aimed to understand how each group viewed the purpose, practice, and impact of the community, and to use these perspectives, especially the voice of lived experience, to shape the new strategy.

Although the process could not be fully co-designed from the very start, companions were actively involved in consultation, interpretation, and sharing of findings.

Participation

Companions, staff, and trustees all took part. Companions were invited to engage through structured sessions designed to create space for honest and practical discussion.

Methods

Peer-only, face-to-face sessions were used for companions to reduce power imbalances and encourage open discussion. A facilitator and note-taker supported each session.



Participants were asked structured questions about:

- what the community is, does, and achieves
- what it should focus on in the future and for whom

Short written bullet points were used to ensure a wide range of views could be captured.

Impact on strategy

Companions identified three key priorities:

- better access to high-quality support
- more training linked to move-on
- access to long-term move-on housing

These priorities shaped strategic decisions in clear and practical ways:

- Support was strengthened through plans for a more proactive support model, dedicated one-to-one time, separate support space, recruitment, and partnership development.
- Training was strengthened through the introduction of new qualifications and external opportunities.
- Move-on housing became a central strategic priority, with work beginning to scope external accommodation and engage potential providers.
- Companions continue to be involved in developing these areas, including co-designing aspects of the move-on offer and contributing to wider community development.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

At what stage are companions currently involved in planning in your community?

What would it look like to involve companions earlier in decision-making?

How do you communicate constraints or limitations clearly and honestly?

Learning from the process

The consultation highlighted a number of strengths. High participation was supported by accessible scheduling and clear communication, while peer-only groups created space for more open and honest dialogue. The use of structured questions ensured that a wide range of views could be captured and that everyone had the opportunity to contribute.

It also identified areas for development. Companions were not involved at the earliest stage of designing the consultation, which limited opportunities for full co-design. There were also challenges in providing enough context to support informed discussion without influencing responses. Reflecting on this, the community recognised the importance of involving companions earlier in the process and widening participation further in future.

2. Case Study:

JOHN



John has participated in involvement at Emmaus for four continuous years, and for shorter periods over twelve years across four communities. He has also held roles at federation level, including Chair of the Companion Forum, Chair of the Companion Committee, and Companion Representative on the federation Committee.

Alongside this, he has his own lived history of homelessness and significant experience of working in homelessness services.

His perspective is not drawn from one position alone. It is shaped by lived experience and by the overlap between service use, work, leadership, and observation. What follows reflects not one abstract view of involvement, but a lived understanding of how it works, what it requires, and what can make it succeed or fail.

Foundations for meaningful involvement

John emphasises that meaningful involvement depends on strong foundations. Without these, involvement will struggle regardless of how many structures or good intentions are in place.

The words he associates most strongly with involvement are: Commitment, risk, willingness, team, effort, failure, opportunity, growth, stress, patience, persistence, trust, honesty, openness, time, people, partnership.

He also highlights the importance of agenda, meaning a shared commitment to providing the best service possible for all stakeholders through genuine partnership.

Companion leads and responsibility

During his time at Emmaus Hampshire, the community operated a system of Companion Leads within the social enterprise. These roles covered areas such as shops, logistics, and catering.

These roles involved real day-to-day responsibility. Companion Leads helped run departments, organise rotas, coordinate with staff, support volunteers and companions, manage practical issues, and contribute to the smooth running of the enterprise. John reflects that these roles could be both challenging and rewarding.

Companion Leads needed to be treated in a balanced way. They needed trust and responsibility similar to that given to employees, while also receiving the additional support required by someone living within the community.

He also describes the unique pressure that comes from living where you work. Companion Leads do not clock off in the same way staff do. They remain part of the community after work and may be seen by others as part of the system.

This can create tension. Some companions may distrust them or be unsure where they stand. The role may place people in a difficult position between peers and staff.

John describes this as a kind of tightrope. Managed well, it can support growth and experience. Managed poorly, it can create strain.

Representation and trust

John also reflects on community meetings and companion meetings.

He notes that attendance and participation depend not only on structure, but also on how involvement is communicated, promoted, and reinforced over time.

Meetings can vary greatly in attendance and engagement. Consistency, timing, visibility, and staff support all matter.

He emphasises that involvement works when people understand why it matters, see how it affects them, and believe that contributions lead to real change.

“When contributions lead to real change, it reinforces what involvement is meant to be: people working together with honesty, trust and a shared commitment to the community.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How are companions supported when they take on roles with real responsibility?

Are expectations and boundaries clear for leadership and representative roles?

How do you build trust in involvement processes over time?

Reflection on impact

For John, the most important and positive aspect of involvement is not complicated.

**I had a voice.
That voice was heard.
It was respected.
At times it was sought out.
Often it led to real change.**

That, for him, is what genuine involvement can achieve when people work together with honesty, commitment, and trust.



4. Case Study: Emmaus UK Consultation 2025

Emmaus UK asked companions across the federation to share their experiences and ideas. The aim was to ensure that lived experience helped shape important decisions and priorities across the organisation. The consultation focused on five areas:

01

**SOCIAL
ENTERPRISE**

02

**LEARNING AND
DEVELOPMENT**

03

**THE COMPANION TRAINING
AND WELLBEING FUND**

04

**MOVE-ON AND
PROGRESSION**

05

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
SUPPORTED HOUSING ACT**

Companions were at the centre of the process. Their experiences helped guide planning and improve how communities work.

The approach

A range of methods were used so that companions could take part in ways that suited them.

These included:

- community visits
- group discussions
- surveys
- peer and governance meetings
- companion-led workshops linked to supported housing legislation

Companions could contribute through group settings, one-to-one discussions, or written feedback.

What was learned

The consultation reinforced that meaningful involvement is more than gathering opinions.

Companions need to:

- help shape how consultations and activities are designed
- feel safe enough to share their views honestly
- see how their suggestions influence real decisions

It also highlighted that using different methods increases participation and enables a wider range of voices to be heard.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How do you gather feedback in your community, and who might be missing from that process?

Are companions involved in shaping how feedback is collected?

How do you show the impact of consultation and involvement?

Impact

The consultation influenced several areas of work, including:

- strengthening guidance and support in response to the Supported Housing Act
- improving social enterprise development so companions can gain skills and confidence
- shaping learning and development opportunities
- improving approaches to move-on support and progression
- helping ensure the Companion Training and Wellbeing Fund is used fairly and effectively

This demonstrates how companion involvement can shape not only local community decisions, but wider organisational priorities.

5. Using Case Studies for Learning and Reflection

These case studies can be used to support discussion and learning within communities.

They may be used in:

- staff meetings
- companion meetings
- training sessions
- mixed group workshops

Communities may find it helpful to:

- read case studies together and discuss what stands out
- compare themes with their own community experience
- identify ideas that could be adapted locally
- use the reflection questions to guide conversation

Case studies are most useful when used actively, rather than simply read in isolation.

6. Key Takeaway

These examples show that meaningful involvement:

- develops over time
- requires trust, structure, and support
- includes both opportunity and challenge
- leads to real impact when it is genuine

There is no single model for doing involvement well.

What matters is a consistent commitment to listening, learning, adapting, and working together.





PART 04:

**RESOURCES, TEMPLATES,
AND TOOLS TO SUPPORT
COMPANION
INVOLVEMENT**

Part 4 brings together the practical resources, templates, and tools that support meaningful, consistent, and transparent companion involvement across Emmaus communities.

These resources are designed to help communities move from intention to action. They support planning, delivery, review, feedback, decision-making, governance, recognition, and reflection.

The resources are flexible and adaptable. Communities vary in size, culture, capacity, and stage of development, so not every tool will be needed at the same time or used in the same way.

Communities are encouraged to:

- start with the resources that match their current priorities
- adapt templates so they are accessible and meaningful locally
- use tools collaboratively with companions wherever possible
- revisit resources over time as involvement develops
- keep tools simple and proportionate

These resources are not intended to create unnecessary paperwork. They are here to support conversations, build confidence, clarify expectations, and strengthen accountability.

Teams may choose to:

- work through sections together
- use reflection questions in team or community discussions
- discuss case studies and compare them to local practice
- identify small actions to test and review
- Involvement develops through practice, reflection, and shared learning.

Editable versions of the resources, including the Model Companion Involvement Policy, can be found on EmmausNet here:
[insert link]



Resource Index

Getting started and planning

Resource 1: Involvement Lead Role

Description Supports communities to identify a named person responsible for coordinating, championing, and supporting involvement locally.

Resource 2: Community Self-Assessment Tool

Helps communities assess where they are on the spectrum of involvement and identify realistic next steps.

Resource 3: Involvement Planning Template

Supports communities to plan involvement activities clearly, including purpose, roles, accessibility, decision-making, feedback, and evaluation.

Resource 4: Setting Up Involvement Activities Checklist

Helps communities check that involvement activities are inclusive, safe, well-planned, and likely to lead to meaningful outcomes.

Recognition and development

Resource 19: Certificate of Involvement

Provides a simple way to recognise and celebrate contribution to involvement activities.

Resource 20: Template Reference Letter

Supports communities to recognise companion contribution, skills, and development through a formal reference.

Meetings and feedback loops

Resource 8: Companion Meeting Terms of Reference

Provides a structure for companion meetings, including purpose, membership, roles, meeting frequency, feedback, and review.

Resource 9: Companion Meeting Agenda Template

Supports clear, accessible, and consistent meeting planning.

Resource 10: Companion Meeting Minutes Template

Supports clear recording of discussion, decisions, actions, and next steps.

Resource 11: Rolling Action Log

Helps communities track agreed actions, responsibilities, progress, and follow-up.

Resource 12: Companion and Staff Meeting Facilitation Checklist

Supports safe, inclusive, and trauma-informed meeting facilitation before, during, and after meetings.

Resource 14: “You Said / We Did / Together We’ve Done” Template

Helps communities visibly show what feedback has been received, what action has been taken, and what will happen next.

Resource Index

Decision-making and governance

Resource 13: Decision Rights Charter Clarifies what companions can influence, co-design, or decide, and where decisions must sit with staff, management, or trustees.

Resource 15: Designated Trustee for Companion Involvement Role Description

Supports Boards to identify a trustee lead for companion involvement and ensure companion voice is represented at governance level.

Resource 21: Companion Committee Chair and Vice Chair Roles

Clarifies the purpose, responsibilities, and expectations of Chair and Vice Chair roles within the Companion Committee.

Resource 22: Companion Committee

federation Committee Representative
Sets out the role of Companion Committee representatives who sit on or contribute to federation-level decision-making.

Resource 23: Companion Committee Terms of Reference

Provides the formal structure, purpose, membership, and ways of working for the Companion Committee.

Resource 24: Companion Representative Role Description

Clarifies the purpose, boundaries, responsibilities, and support needs of the Companion Representative role.

Peer mentoring and peer advocacy

Resource 16: Peer Mentoring Role Description

Sets out the purpose, responsibilities, boundaries, and support arrangements for peer mentoring roles.

Resource 17: Peer Mentoring Agreement

Provides a simple agreement between the peer mentor and community to support safe, clear, and positive mentoring.

Resource 18: Peer Mentoring Log / Reflective Journal

Supports peer mentors to reflect on their activity, learning, challenges, and next steps without recording confidential personal details.

Feedback, evaluation, and review

Resource 5: Companion Involvement Feedback Form

Supports companions to give feedback on their experience of being involved and whether they felt listened to, prepared, supported, and valued.

Resource 6: Involvement Activity Evaluation Form

Supports staff, companions, and project Leads to reflect on what worked well, what changed, and what could improve after an involvement activity.

Resource 7: Involvement Annual Review Form

Helps communities review involvement over a year or set period, including activity levels, impact, challenges, changes made, and future priorities.

Further Reading and Resources

The following external resources may be useful for communities wanting to strengthen companion involvement, co-production, and peer mentoring practice.

Toolkits and guidance

- Influence and Participation Toolkit – Mind www.mind.org.uk/about-us/policy-and-campaigns/influence-and-participation-toolkit/
- Co-Production Toolkit – Homeless Link www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/resources/co-production-toolkit
- Co-production in Practice – BHT Sussex www.bht.org.uk
- Co-production Centre – Expert Link www.expertlink.org.uk
- Co-Production Toolkits – Single Homeless Project www.shp.org.uk
- Co-production Toolkit – South Yorkshire Housing Association (SYHA) www.syha.co.uk

Peer mentoring and training

- Level 2 Award in Peer Mentoring – Shaw Trust www.shaw-trust.org.uk
- Coaching and Mentoring Training www.institutelm.com
- Accredited Peer-Mentoring Training – Intuitive Thinking Skills www.intuitivethinkingskills.com
- Mental Health Pathway – IMROC <https://imroc.org>
- Courses – Lived Experience Training <https://livedexperiencetraining.co.uk>

Policy, standards and regulation

- Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/15/contents
- National Statement of Expectations for Supported Housing – UK Government www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-statement-of-expectations-for-supported-housing



Further Reading and Resources

Companion voice and participation

- Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)
www.tpas.org.uk
 - National Housing federation – Resident Engagement
www.housing.org.uk
 - Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) – Resident Involvement
www.cih.org
-

These resources are provided as a starting point. Communities are encouraged to explore, adapt, and use materials that best support their local context and approach to companion involvement.

Evaluation and impact

- Centre for Homelessness Impact – Evaluation Toolkit
www.homelessnessimpact.org/toolkits
-



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