

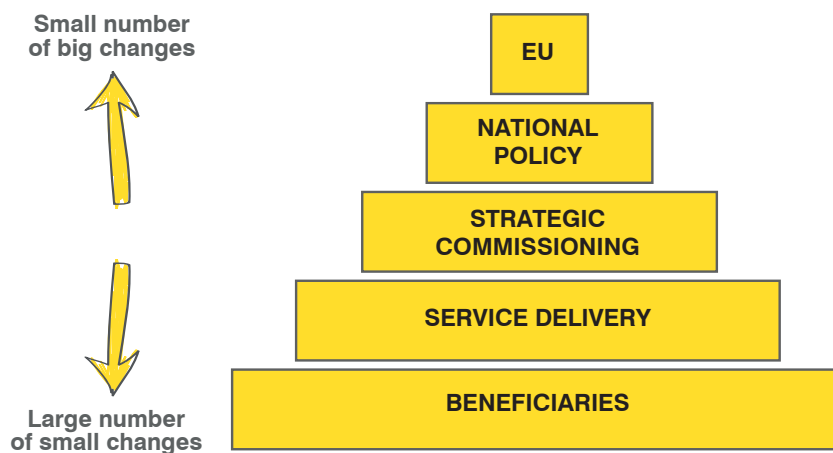
Building Support

Influencing the next Government and other stakeholders

Why influence?



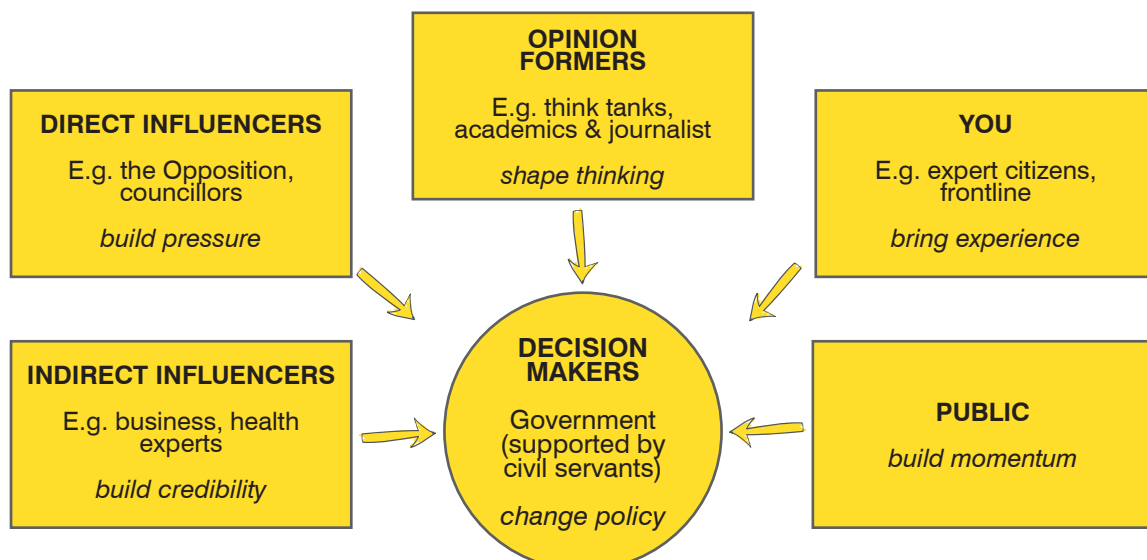
To achieve sustainable change we need to look beyond our services and get some influential people on board. We will need changes to national policies and local priorities to make a big difference to people's lives. This is Opportunity Nottingham's system change model...



Who could help?



As well as MEAM, you may know lots of people who can help make a difference.



Some things to consider when getting decision makers on-side

Here are some tips that can help smooth the way. You will have more to add!



Start early

It's easier to get people on side if you involve them early. If they have had a chance to share their concerns or expertise they will be more willing to help later on. It is harder to get support for an idea you came up with on your own.

Keep it simple

Everybody is busy! After introductions, your first sentence should cover why you contacted them and why it is important to them. Be sympathetic to how much info they have to take in so make it easy and relevant. Try to add value and not merely relay information.

Be clear on what you are asking for

It's better to go with answers as well as problems. How would you specifically like them to help? If it is too early to say focus on letting them know who you are, that you would like to update them as the project progresses, and may call on them for support. And then follow up!

Find your common ground

We think it's a moral issue, but not all will. So why does it matter to them? Can you show how it fits with an area they are interested in, or that you are tackling an issue of national relevance? Can you show why it would make a difference to their constituents or colleagues?



Involve expert citizens

Why should they listen to you? Because you have lived experience or work with people every day who do. It gives you information that they don't have, but need if they are going to make a difference and spend public money wisely.

Working with people with lived experience needs careful planning. Think about why you are asking their opinion and seek consent for anything you plan to do with it later. Remember feedback – we all get frustrated when asked our opinion and then we don't hear back.

Think about how to cover any expenses, and perhaps recognise the value of their time with a payment or vouchers. More advice on these issues is available from organisations like Shaping Our Lives (e.g. <http://www.shapingourlives.org.uk/documents/BTUSGUIDE.pdf>) and Involve.

Make it appeal

Positive, appropriate language is important if you want to get people on side. Is your language 'liftable and quotable'? If you can imagine them saying it they are more likely to.

Back it up

Case studies that tell a real life story are easier for people to remember. Facts and figures, especially from independent research, help make a case and show how a change could have impact if 'scaled up'. Money talks – the average cost of many services are now published (e.g. at www.neweconomymanchester.com).