Engaging Communities Toolkit

January 2020

A practical guide to community engagement and consultation

Introduction

This Community Engagement Toolkit is a resource to provide practical advice on how to approach community engagement and information on the issues to consider when planning and designing community engagement activities. The purpose of this toolkit is to support employees who want to engage with communities by helping them to: understand the planning and delivery elements of different types of engagement; recognise and appreciate the different levels of engagement and the impact these can have; and to outline the methods and techniques that can be used to effectively involve people. The toolkit aims to increase the understanding of the relevance and importance of community engagement to help us to create more meaningful ways for local people to become involved in decisions that affect their lives.

What is Community Engagement?

The term Community Engagement can mean different things to different people. It is best understood as a planned process, which has the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people; whether they are connected by place, interest, affiliation or identify, to encourage them to actively take part in making decisions about their community. This can range from encouraging communities to share their views on how their needs are best met and influence how services should be delivered, to giving communities the power to make and share decisions on how services are delivered.

What community Engagement is not!

While understanding what successful Community Engagement is and why it is important it is also useful to understand that Community Engagement is not:
- about gaining community input when a decision has already been made and the community can have little or no influence
- a coercive process that obliges people to agree
- a single event or activity

Defining our Communities

Communities are usually defined as groups of people who have common characteristics. They can be broadly categorised as 'communities of place', defined by location such as a street, a ward, a town or an area, or 'communities of interest', defined by any shared characteristic, such as race, age, occupation, shared interest, affinity or other common bond.

South Ayrshire has an active voluntary and community sector with over xxx groups and organisations providing valuable support and services. Many of these groups are made up of small neighbourhood community organisations working locally to support others in their area.

We recognise how important it is to involve communities and give them the means to influence issues that affect them. We also recognise that people can be members of several different communities and that some people find it harder to make themselves heard than others. We want to ensure that we actively involve all of our communities in a purposeful and meaningful way.

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Benefits of effective Community Engagement:

There are many benefits of effective community engagement for both the Council and for the people with whom we engage and these include:

- Enhanced wellbeing and increased levels of satisfaction through local people being genuinely involved in decisions
- Increase local ownership and enhanced civic pride – if people feel valued and included they are more likely to participate.
- Improved communication between people and organisations resulting in better relationships and trust to develop between policy makes and local people.
- Increased openness and accessibility
- Promotion of social inclusion
- Increased sustainability – sustainable change can only happen if communities are involved from the start
- Responsive services that meet local need

National Context

At a national level there are a number of drivers which reinforce the importance of community engagement. In 2011, the Christie Report - The Commission for the Future Delivery of Public Services concluded that future public services should be built around people and communities and should strengthen their autonomy and resilience. The Scottish Government's response to the report outlined a commitment to listening, engaging and responding to community needs and aspirations through open dialogue.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 sets out clear expectations that public bodies will properly engage with local communities with a specific focus on community engagement to achieve greater control and influence by communities in decision making.   It requires us to promote and facilitate participation and to put in place processes and policies to support this.

The National Standards for Community Engagement (2016) are a set of principles which the Council is committed to upholding through the delivery of this strategy. The principles are:

Inclusion - identify and involve the people/ organisations affected

Support - identify and overcome any barriers to participation

Planning - clear purpose for engagement based on shared understanding of community needs and ambitions

Working together - to achieve the aims of engagement

Methods - that are fit for purpose

Communication - clearly and regularly with the people, organisations and communities affected by the engagement

Impact - assess impact of engagement and use what has been learned to improve our future community engagement.

The Spectrum of Community Engagement

The International Association of Public Participation identifies five key stages in the spectrum of engagement. The Council has adopted this framework and will use it to identify, plan and measure the effectiveness of our community engagement activities. It shows the increasing level of public impact as engagement progresses from the 'inform' stage through to the 'empower' stage and explains the range of participation and engagement options available. It will help assist with selecting the most suitable level of participation or engagement. There are five definitions of engagement within the spectrum. These are:

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	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision making in the hands of the public
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide

This sets out not just the type of engagement activity that is required but also what this will achieve and what it actually means for our communities.

Strategic Context

The Council Plan 2018-2022 sets out the Council's vision focussed on 'Our People, Our Place'. It details the high-level objectives and outcomes we want to achieve by 2022. The Council Plan also reinforces

the importance of engagement with our communities an in ensuring that their voices and opinions are heard in terms of the effectiveness of our service delivery and to help drive further improvement where necessary. Our strategic objectives are:

- Effective leadership that promotes fairness
- Reduce poverty and disadvantage
- Health and care systems that meet people's needs
- Make the most of the local economy
- Increase the profile and reputation of South Ayrshire and the Council
- Enhanced environment through social, cultural and economic activities

The Plan also sets out the Council's ambitions to improve placemaking and create local place plans by listening to communities and enabling greater choices in how they lead their day to day lives. In order to do this South Ayrshire Council has adopted a corporate approach to placemaking - Placemaking in South Ayrshire This will be used in the development of 'place plans' by ensuring that all those responsible for providing services and looking after assets in a place work and plan together, and engage with local communities, to improve places.

To assist this work, The Place Standard Toolkit has been used to speak to people about how they feel about their community. The toolkit   provides a simple framework to structure community conversations about place. It allows consideration of the physical elements of a place (for example its buildings, spaces, and transport links) as well as the social aspects (for example whether people feel they have a say in decision making).

Locality Planning is a key element of **Health and Social Care integration** and its legal basis is set out within the Public Bodies(Joint Working) (Scotland) Act, 2014.   The main aim of Locality Planning is to deliver health and social care effectively, and Locality Planning Groups have been established in six areas across South Ayrshire. The South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan reflects the different needs of each area and also looks at available resources.   This will be driven through local structure where local people, the third and public sectors come together and establish what each locality's needs with regard to health and social care South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership - Locality Planning

Planning Community Engagement

Community Engagement works best when it is an ongoing process which allows relationships and trust to build and strengthen over time. Engagement activities should be planned with this in mind. Communities, groups or individuals may want to participate at a range of levels. Some may only want to share their views or keep informed. Others will want to be involved in the design of services or even in delivering projects or pieces of work themselves.

Thinking through the following questions will help in the planning and design of community engagement activities:

- What is the purpose of the engagement activity?
- Who needs to be involved in the engagement process?
- What level of engagement are you hoping to achieve?

- What resources might you need?
- What method(s) of engagement might you want to adopt?
- How will you ensure you are being inclusive?
- How will you overcome barriers to participation?

What is the purpose?

Before beginning any engagement process, it is important to be clear about the purpose. This will help ensure you select the most appropriate and meaningful engagement methods to use. Setting out your aims is an important step in ensuring a clear understanding of why the engagement activity is proposed. Think about what difference you want your engagement to make and what you hope will change as a result of the engagement. This will help you to plan your engagement activity effectively.

Who should be involved?

Who you involve depends very much on what you are engaging on. To get the most from your engagement activity, it is useful to use a range of methods and techniques to achieve the widest possible participation. Local community networks and support organisations should be involved and can help to identify community stakeholders, their particular interests and needs and how best to engage with them. Issues to consider include:

- What individuals, groups or communities might the issue or proposal impact on?
- Who represents these groups or communities?
- Are there any existing community networks or established channels of communication?
- Are their gaps in information which could be addressed by tapping into local knowledge?
- Relevant equality legislation to ensure you involve as wide a cross section of people as possible and in particular across protected characteristic groups.

There are many groups, organisations and individuals that represent a whole range of interests in South Ayrshire. These might include:

- Local residents
- Tenants and residents associations
- Locality based groups
- Communities of Interest
- Faith based groups
- Local Community groups
- Voluntary groups
- Service Users
- Web based or virtual groups
- Youth Groups / Youth Forums
- Groups supported by Council services such as CLD
- Community Councils

Statutory Consultation

In some instances, the method of consultation is prescribed by law. This is called a statutory consultation. Before beginning any consultation exercise you should ensure that, if it is a statutory consultation, you include any identified statutory consultees as a minimum. For further guidance on this you should speak to colleagues within Legal Services.

What level of engagement are you hoping to achieve?

Individuals can participate in a variety of ways, and to different levels of influence, in helping to identify community needs, generate solutions, plan new projects and influence how services are developed and delivered. The purpose of your engagement will help determine the appropriate level of engagement and who needs to be involved.

What time and resources are available?

The following types of resources will be required for most forms of engagement:
- Input by staff, volunteers and other interested parties
- Background information or briefing papers on issue(s), plans or proposals
- Communication and promotion – venues, transport, childcare, translation
- Publication and printing of materials
- Resourcing local voluntary groups to support people in understanding and responding to information and proposals; convene meetings; be involved in conversations; attending meetings and events.

What method(s) of engagement might you want to adopt?

Understanding what community engagement is and the different approaches will help to determine what level of engagement is appropriate and what methods are most suitable to achieving the best outcome. Section XXXX provides a description of the main types of engagement and the benefits and disadvantages of using each of these. You should also consider the spectrum of engagement and revisit your objectives to determine the level of engagement you need and therefore the method(s) most appropriate.

Inclusive Engagement

Inclusiveness is a key principle of community engagement therefore it is important that engagement activities reflect this. There are groups in the community who are traditionally more difficult to engage with, sometimes referred to as 'hard to reach'. There are also individuals who are regularly involved in consultation or community activity but who don't necessarily reflect the views of their community. It is important to ensure that people are engaged with in the most appropriate way and are not marginalised as a result of their involvement, or lack of, in community activities. Selecting the most appropriate method of engagement for individuals or groups will increase the effectiveness and success of any engagement activity. Ensuring that an engagement process is inclusive contributes to its value and its legitimacy. The real challenge of inclusiveness is to avoid involving only those people

who are easier to reach and therefore leaving the views of everyone else out. In consideration of this you should:

- think creatively about ways to access individuals or groups. This could also be through informal networks, social venues or local organisations.
- take measures that will help overcome the barriers that prevent some people from participating e.g. translators, visual aids, providing childcare, accessible venues.
- be flexible over timing, location and transport issues to ensure you accommodate the needs and requirements of particular individuals or groups.
- use methods that are appropriate to certain types of groups or individuals. For example avoid the use of questionnaires with those who have literacy needs or holding a meeting at a time that may prevent people attending.

Harder to reach groups might include:
- Asylum Seekers
- Young People
- Homeless Population
- Working People
- Minority ethnic communities
- Offenders
- Older People
- People with disabilities
- People with mental health problems
- People with addiction problems
- Travellers
- People with learning difficulties

Guiding Principles for Community Engagement

The issues outlined above will help to plan the most relevant approach to community engagement, and a range of methods may need to be explored before the best method is found in each circumstance. The guiding principles outlined below should be considered and will help to deliver positive outcomes.
- The reasons for engaging with communities should be made clear from the start of the process to ensure clarity of purpose and transparency about what can and cannot be influenced.
- People should be involved at the earliest opportunity to allow them to influence how the process will be conducted and consider the issues involved.
- A knowledge of community needs, issues and priorities is equally important both in helping to understand the local context and in finding out what is important to local people.
- An awareness of what other engagement may be taking place will also be useful in avoiding any duplication of effort and thinking through how engagement activity can be co-ordinated.
- It will be easier to connect with people by engaging with them through existing networks and community links and meeting with them in the places and spaces they use.

- Thinking about methods of communication, the language used and approach taken is important to ensure that the engagement is inclusive, representative and meaningful.
- Building trust and good relationships can take time but is an essential aspect of effective engagement.
- Being flexible and responsive will also help to ensure that the process is inclusive and productive.
- Participants also need to receive feedback on how their views have been taken into account and what will happen after the engagement process has concluded.

Overcoming Barriers to Engagement

When planning an engagement process you also need to identify potential barriers to participation and design the process to minimise these where possible. The table below illustrates some potential barriers that may prevent individuals or groups getting involved and identifies some areas you may want to consider which may help remove these barriers.

Potential Barriers	Design issues to consider
The capacity and ability of different stakeholders, groups and individuals to participate	A range of techniques and engagement methods should be used.
'Hard to reach' groups such as young people, older people, minority groups or socially excluded groups	Independent facilitation can help. It is often beneficial to begin engagement through existing relationships.
Lack of appropriate venue within the community	Location and accessibility of venue Transport
Rural isolation	Location and accessibility of venue Number and type of engagement events
Childcare	Provide childcare needs
Literacy and Numeracy	Format and content of communication and publicity material
Hearing or visually impaired	Use of interpreters and signers

Questionnaire Design

The wording of individual questions is a very important part of designing a questionnaire. Often poorly designed questionnaires lead to many problems including increased time required for analysis. The key to good questionnaire design is concise questions that are easy to interpret and give accurate information. Generally speaking there are two types of questions. Open and Closed.

Open questions are those that ask for unprompted opinions with no predetermined set of responses, for example:
'What improvements, if any, could be made to make your neighbourhood a better place to live'?

Comment.

An obvious advantage is that the variety of responses will be wider and will more truly reflect the opinions of respondents. However, using open question have several disadvantages: they require to be read individually; there is no way to code or statistically analyse them; they are more time consuming to analyse; they require more time on the part of the respondent completing the questionnaire and this may decrease the level of response.

Closed format questions often take the form of multiple choice questions. They can come in different styles such as single or multiple responses and by ranking or rating.

Single response question ask respondents to choose one option from a provided list, for example	
'What is your **main** means of transport when travelling to work?'	
Bus	
Train	
Car	
Bike	
By foot	

Multiple response questions allow more than one answer, for example	
'Which of the following means of transport do you use when travelling to work'? (tick all that apply)	
Bus	
Train	
Car	
Bike	
By foot	

Ranking questions allows respondents to rank a set of options by numbering them in order of importance, for example	
'Place in order of importance to you the following features of your local sports centre'. (Indicate by numbering from 1-5 in order, 1 being the most important)	
Cleanliness	
Changing Rooms	
Equipment	
Staff	
Classes	

Rating questions allow respondents to rate a set of provided features, for example

'State how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the following features of your local sports centre'					
	Extremely satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Extremely dissatisfied
Cleanliness					
Changing Rooms					
Equipment					
Staff					
Classes					

Effective Communication Skills for Engagement

An important part of any community engagement activity is good communication. To get the most out of community engagement activity, it is worth in thinking through the key skills that are required and the behaviours that will help to encourage, support and enable individuals to participate in ways that suit them.

"The heart of community engagement is the development of relationships, open and clear communication, networking, listening and learning to understand the diverse people and places that you are working with"

Community Engagement should be a positive experience for those carrying out the engagement and those being engaged with. Below are some of the key skills that are relevant to community engagement practice.

Facilitation
Facilitation is used to help encourage and enable individuals to participate in a variety of situations. A good facilitator will make things easier and enhance people's willingness and ability to get involved. Some effective facilitation points are:
- Lead, but don't take over
- Summarise and communicate
- Offer praise and support
- Be assertive, not aggressive
- Listen to what people say
- Treat participants equally
- Encourage participants

Listening
Showing you are interested in what people are saying and why they are saying it. This creates a trusting and supportive atmosphere. Participants should feel that they have been listened to and that they have been understood.

Questioning

Ask the right questions, of the right people, at the right time, in the right way. This will keep the discussion moving. Good use of questions will help to bring structure to the engagement activity.

Analysis

When analysing the results of any consultation or engagement exercise you may want to consider:

- Are people generally satisfied / dissatisfied?
- What areas do people agree on?
- Where do opinions differ and why?
- Can you benchmark against other Councils?
- What can you change in the short term fairly easily that would have a positive impact?
- Which things do not need action because people rate them highly?
- What will require long term change?
- What are the next steps?

Feedback and Evaluation

One aspect of community engagement that can discredit the process is lack of feedback to participants. It is very important to inform people how their views have been taken into account, the broad findings from the process and what has happened as a result of the engagement.

If people feel their views have been considered then they are more likely to continue to participate in engagement activities and see this is as worthwhile process. If feedback isn't given, participants may think that taking part is a waste of time, or that they have been ignored and won't know if their contribution has made a difference. Feedback methods could include:

- Writing emails or letters
- Providing summary reports of meetings, events or workshops
- Holding a workshop to provide feedback
- Presentations to groups
- Publishing newsletters or posters
- Using websites to post information
- Using local media to communicate information
- Using social media

Evaluation

It is important that any engagement process is evaluated in order to learn what worked well, what didn't work and why. You should:

- be clear about the aims of your engagement process so you can evaluate whether or not these have been met.
- ensure you ask participants, staff, groups and any others involved in the process if they thought the process did what it set out to do and how they found the engagement experience.

- use evaluation forms to gather information from participants about an event or meeting. This will capture how people felt at the event or meeting and provide you with an opportunity to ask questions about individual elements of the event.

Community Engagement Tools and Methods

The following section provides guidance on a range of different methods and techniques that can be used to engage with communities. This section will give you some ideas about the different ways to work with people to get the most out of your engagement activity.

Fact Sheet / Newsletter		
What is it?	**Benefits**	**Weaknesses**
• It can be used to provide information about a local area or particular project in a paper or on line format. • It is one of the cheapest and most cost effective methods of keeping people informed. • It can be a useful complement to other forms of engagement.	• If information is provided regularly, this can build community awareness and understanding. • It is an effective means of developing and sustaining an interest in a community. • It can be developed in a format that appeals to a target group • It is cost effective	• It may not be accessible to people with low levels of literacy or visual impairment. • People may not take the time to read it. • It is a one-way communication method and does not allow for any discussion or questions to be asked.

Information posted on a website		
What is it?	**Benefits**	**Weaknesses**
• Websites can be used to provide information to the public. • Online methods can be used as standalone processes or as part of a wider engagement activity. • A variety of web based options are available which provides the opportunity to get involved at different levels.	• People can choose a convenient time and place to look at the information. • It can be useful for those who would find it difficult to attend an event for a range of reasons. • It is cost effective • It can reach large numbers of people • It is less time consuming than attending a workshop or meeting.	• It excludes those without access to the internet. • There needs to be a wider communication to publicise this to generate activity. • It does not allow for two-way discussion or provide the opportunity for feedback.

Street stalls and displays		
What is it?	**Benefits**	**Weaknesses**
• Opportunity to use highly visual materials to get a particular message or information across to a range of audiences. • Displays are normally set up in local community areas like community centres, shopping centres or libraries. • Useful for informing the public and stimulating discussion on issues.	• Can collect the views of large numbers of people. • Can be very interactive. • Engages and generates interest. • Can reach people who may not normally participate.	• Can generate a large amount of data • Requires advance planning and preparation • Requires several facilitators to engage with people • If people can't attend on that day, they will miss it.

Shop Fronts		
What is it?	**Benefits**	**Weaknesses**
• These can be temporary venues set up in a heavily used public area to display information or provide a venue where people can meet, collect information and have discussions. • They need to be effectively located to target a large audience.	• Can collect the views of large numbers of people. • Can be very interactive. • Engages and generates interest. • Can reach people who may not normally participate. • Increases visibility and accessibility of project/topic • Provides a venue/physical space for local people to engage	• Can be expensive to establish • Requires resources in terms of staff and venue • Access could be an issue depending on opening hours

Public Meetings		
What is it?	**Benefits**	**Weaknesses**
• Provides an opportunity to consult large numbers of people • They are open to all • They provide an opportunity for people to ask questions and discuss issues. • As part of a series of events they can be a valuable way of sharing information and demonstrating openness and transparency.	• Enables large numbers of people to have their say • Provides an opportunity for participants to give information and gather feedback • Demonstrates openness and transparency • Can attract publicity and can be used as a launch event • Enables participants to develop networks	• Unlikely to be a fully representative – not everyone has the time or confidence to attend • Attendance can be low unless people feel personally or deeply concerned about a subject • Some people may feel uncomfortable speaking in front of a large group • Traditional formats can limit audience contribution and lead to conflict • If confrontational it may lead to poor media publicity

Surveys and Questionnaires		
The main stages involved are: defining the sample size and the type of information required; deciding on the type of survey to be used (postal, drop and collect, telephone or interview); survey design; undertaking the survey and post- completion analysis of the results		
What is it?	**Benefits**	**Weaknesses**
• Most widely used consultation method • Can identify needs and views of a large number of people in a standard format • Often best to use a short and concise questionnaire where people's views on an issue are being sought • Surveys can be completed through face to face interviews, self-completion written forms, over the telephone, or electronically over the internet or email	• Good way of collecting quantitative information from local people at a certain point in time • Can gain the views of a large number of people • Useful for obtaining quantitative data • In principle data can be compared over time with results from elsewhere • Useful for identifying and evidencing need	• Surveys used alone can sometimes be limited • Need to be well designed to get useable data • Large questionnaire surveys can be time consuming • They do not offer any real sense of community engagement or provide an opportunity for people to exchange views • Can contribute to 'over-consultation' if public are surveyed on a number of occasions

Web Based Consultation		
What is it?	**Benefits**	**Weaknesses**
• As well as being used to provide information the internet offers a range of opportunities for individuals to engage in decision making processes. • Online consultation should be considered as part of a range of other consultative tools. • Interactive websites can support consultation by enabling people to get involved online. This could be by completing online surveys, taking part in a poll or participating in online discussions. • Discussion forums provide the public with an alternative method of getting their views on particular issues across. By monitoring discussions you may identify people who may participate in other ways.	• A range of online tools are available • Cost effective • Can reach a wide audience quickly • Gives more choice to individuals as to when and how they can participate • If anonymised may increase participation	• Participation is limited to those with access to the internet • Resources required to analyse information gained • Resources required to set up and mediate discussion forums • Lacks a personal approach

Consultation Documents		
Should ideally be web based and paper based. The use of diagrams and illustrations rather than text can help. The number of questions should be kept to a minimum and every question asked should be relevant.		
What is it?	**Benefits**	**Weaknesses**
• Regularly used for formal consultation. • A document which allows whoever is consulting on a particular issue to set out in detail a particular situation and ask specific questions. • Provides an opportunity to provide detailed background information on a particular proposal issue.	• Allows you to set out in detail the whole picture and ask specific questions. • Can be used when you need to explain complex information and/or provide background information. • Web based processes allow comments on documents and responses to questions to be displayed in full.	• Sometimes the size and level of detail can have a negative effect on people being consulted. • People are reluctant to read long documents. • A large number of responses can be labour intensive to collate and analyse.

Citizen Panels		
What is it?	**Benefits**	**Weaknesses**
• Representative samples of people from a local area who sign up to be involved in various consultations activities. • Panels can involve small or large numbers of people	• Using the same panel a number of times reduces costs • People agree to be on the panel thereby increasing response rates • May allow for some measurement of changes over time • Provides a ready-made sample of individuals to consult with • The composition of panels can be representative of the local population	• People on the panel can become more knowledgeable (and therefore less representative) than the general public over time • Turnover of panel members may reduce the validity of tracking over time • Information provided may mean responses are not an accurate reflection of opinion among the less informed • Can be too generic unless filters are applied • Can exclude 'hard to reach' people

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Workshops or Focus Groups

Can be designed to exchange information; to discuss a specific idea or project; can provide innovative thinking for a way forward for a project; and they can be specifically geared towards prioritisation or the production of an action plan.

What is it?	Benefits	Weaknesses
• Allows people to discuss their ideas in an open and relaxed atmosphere • Can take a variety of different formats, depending on the topic for discussion • Can specifically concentrate on a single issue or programme of topics	• Encourages active discussion in a welcoming environment • Time and resource efficient way of identifying and clarifying key issues • Can be designed for specific purposes • If there is potential for conflict this can be better managed in a small group • Can be directly targeted at excluded or 'hard to reach' groups	• With small groups, it is difficult to be ensure all stakeholders or interests are represented • Workshops can be dominated by articulate and confident individuals if not carefully facilitated • Requires experienced facilitators

Community Fairs/ Events

Should incorporate a range of activities and events to cater for the broadest possible audience. Community events work best if a number of organisations in the community get together to run one.

What is it?	Benefits	Weaknesses
• Provides a fun, informal atmosphere that should attract a wide ranging audience • Provides a range of opportunities to inform and engage participants about local issues • As well providing opportunities to distribute information, it can also be used for consultation and involvement	• Can reach a large number of people • Allows for different levels of engagement • Can allow for creativity in the ways in which people are engaged • If a number of organisations get involved, the range of activities can be increased and generate more interest	• It may not appeal to the people who most need to be reached • Can be expensive and require a lot of resources • May not be well attended

Asset Based Community Engagement		
What is it?	**Benefits**	**Weaknesses**
• Using maps and photographs of an area or specific location to illustrate how people view their area; what they like or dislike or improvements they would like to see • Practical way of finding out what assets exist in a community • A variety of aspects can be mapped including land use, community facilities, transport, and businesses to develop a snapshot of the area • Provides an opportunity to identify assets in the broadest sense; not just about the physical assets but the people, groups and skills that exist in a community	• Stimulates discussion • Can build a sense of community ownership • Can help people see and understand their community in different ways	• Can generate ideas which are not possible to implement • It may be difficult to interpret participants ideas • Participants need to be familiar with the local area

World Cafes		
What is it?	**Benefits**	**Weaknesses**
• Opportunity to gather the views of participants in a comfortable and informal setting, much like a café • The room is set up to look like a café • Food is usually provided • Discussions take place in small groups. The tablecloths are used to take notes and make comments.	• Informal atmosphere created which encourages conversation • Flexible • Less formal than a public meeting • Easier to get people to attend	• Potential for raising expectations • Success can be dependent on the questions set • No qualitative data

• Participants move around the tables to cover a range of topics		

Open Space Events

What is it?	Benefits	Weaknesses
• An approach to meetings that gives participants the opportunity to set the agenda. Participants are responsible for the content and recording of the event • The event has a set theme but no fixed programme or agenda • The theme is introduced and participants are invited to identify issues they are interested in, and asked to take responsibility for running a session • Participants can move from one session to another	• Increases skills of participants • Promotes empowerment and ownership • Breaks down traditional 'them' and 'us' barriers • Good for addressing difficult issues • Fluid and unstructured approach	• Limited control • Risk of not recording information correctly • As they are 'one-off' events, people may miss out

Appreciative Inquiry

What is it?	Benefits	Weaknesses
• Builds a vision for the future using questions to focus people's attention on past and future successes • Group discussions focus on the positive aspects of an area; what people enjoy about their area and their hopes for the future • The process begins with a core group setting and testing questions. These are then used to gather	• It can involve people who don't usually take part • Involves a range of people, not just those who can attend an event • Focuses on what can be achieved • Encourages participants to reflect on what has worked well	• May avoid addressing a problem • Ensuring consistency of approach by staff involved as facilitators or interviewers • Can be time consuming • Can take a long time to reach a conclusion

• information from the wider community • The findings from the process are then analysed collectively by the community to create a plan for future		

Citizen's Juries

What is it?	Benefits	Weaknesses
• A group of citizens who are representative of a community meet to consider a complex issue by gathering evidence, deliberating and reaching a decision • Jurors can hear from and ask questions of experts and 'witnesses' before they reach their decision • After they reach a decision, the jury presents the recommendation/decision	• Empowering experience for those involved • Can result in obtaining community opinions on complex issues • Helps to identify solutions to problems • Participants gain an in depth understanding of the issue • Enables decision makers to understand what the public think	• A high level of skill is required as participants are often asked to analyse complex issues • Representatives of jury may be compromised due to small numbers • Issues are often complex, and require extensive preparatory work • Could exclude individuals with low literacy or non-English speakers • You have to be prepared to accept the results or else the process loses credibility

Planning for Real

What is it?	Benefits	Weaknesses
• Practical technique involving a 3D architectural model of an area used to help participants decide what improvements are needed in their local area. • Local residents are involved in creating the model • The model can be displayed in public venues to generate discussion	• Adds variety to consultation and can engage people who might not otherwise get involved • It is accessible to people of all abilities and backgrounds • Can build a sense of community ownership of the process • Can help people see and understand their community in different ways	• Can generate ideas which are not impossible to implement • Preparing for and facilitating events can be time consuming • The card count can be seen as conclusive and may cause conflict particularly if there is a disagreement

• These details are then fed back to people, discussed further and prioritised at public meetings or small group discussions.		

Data Protection

Data Protection Legislation requires those undertaking consultation to ensure that respondents are aware of why we collect information, what we will do with it, who it will be shared with and how long it will be retained.

A privacy statement has to be created specifically covering consultation, research and statistics. If you are undertaking a consultation exercise then you will need to provide information to potential respondents. This can be done by including a link to the relevant privacy statement:

Equalities

To comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and to ensure that all consultations are accessible to everyone, consultation documents should be available in different formats and languages upon request.

It is recommended that, when carrying out any consultation, equalities information should be included. This allows us to identify any gaps in representation from any of the protected characteristics. Requests for equalities information, along with any personal information, is usually included in a separate section of any questionnaire or survey. It is important to inform respondents why we are collecting this information and what it will be used for (equalities monitoring, analysis purposes, and to inform any related equality impact assessment).