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# Introduction

This Community Engagement Toolkit brings together a range of introductory information on community engagement.

It has been designed as a practical resource for anyone who wants to learn more about what we mean by engagement; providing practical guidance on the issues to consider when planning and designing community engagement activities.

The purpose of this toolkit is to support a whole range of individuals such as local workers, voluntary organisations and community members in the planning and delivery of different types of engagement; through recognising and appreciating the different levels of engagement; and outlining the methods and techniques that can be used to effectively involve people. The toolkit aims to increase understanding of community engagement to create more meaningful ways for local people to become involved in decisions that affect their lives.

West Lothian has a great track record of good community engagement practice. Good practice case studies can be found throughout the toolkit to demonstrate the varied and innovative ways that practitioners in West Lothian have involved local people.

This toolkit aims to support and promote effective community engagement practice in West Lothian. It does not cover every method and technique that can be used to engage people, but signposts useful and informative resources so that more detailed information can be found.

The toolkit was developed by West Lothian's Community Engagement Practitioners Network; a group of practitioners from organisations across West Lothian who are involved in community engagement.

The network is jointly supported by West Lothians Community Planning Team and Community Regeneration Team.



## Benefits of community engagement

- 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.
- Increased **dialogue** and **communication** between local people and organisations. Working in partnership will allow better relationships and trust to develop between policy makers 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.

## Case Study *Community Engagement in Kirknewton*

Kirknewton run a community engagement exercise, via the Kirknewton Community Development Trust (CDT), every five years to determine what people like about Kirknewton, what they don't like and what they would like to see. Engagement is based on these three simple questions. The latest exercise was carried out in 2014. Prior to carrying out the engagement, the CDT met with a range of community groups to make sure everyone in the community was informed of their plans. Promotion of the engagement activity was done through flyers, posters, Facebook, twitter, websites, blogs, local newsletters and through West Lothian Council social media. Engagement activities included an open day, meeting with a wide range of groups in the community including school children, carrying out street and outreach work door to door and holding a feedback day at the end. Throughout the process, the CDT track individuals they speak to on a map so they can identify

unrepresented areas and ensure people in these areas are involved in the process.

This work informs a five year development plan that the CDT uses to attract funding and direct their resources into. The work in 2010 cost £8000 but attracted half a million pounds of funding and several new volunteers. In the work undertaken in 2014 for the 2016 - 2020 plan 'community spirit' came from nowhere as the number one reason people like to live in Kirknewton. 560 people engaged with the process (Kirknewton has a population of just under 2000).



## The Spectrum of Community Engagement

This spectrum of engagement demonstrates the possible types of engagement with stakeholders and communities. It shows the increasing level of public impact as you progress from 'inform' through to 'empower' and explains the range of public participation and engagement options available. It will help to assist with selecting the most suitable level of participation or engagement.

Increasing Level of Public Impact

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Purpose	To provide the public with information to assist their understanding of an issue	To collect information from the public about attitudes and opinions	To work with the public throughout all stages of the process to ensure their concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, agree sharing of resources and decision making.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
Expectation	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and provide feedback on how public input has informed the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations shape the process and influence the decision.	We will look to you for advice and help in developing solutions and incorporate your advice and	We will implement what you decide
Example techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Fact Sheets</li> <li>➤ Websites</li> <li>➤ Street Stalls/ Displays</li> <li>➤ Newsletters</li> <li>➤ Shop Fronts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Surveys</li> <li>➤ Public Meetings</li> <li>➤ Web based consultation</li> <li>➤ Citizens Panels</li> <li>➤ Consultation documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Workshops</li> <li>➤ Community Events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Citizen Advisory Committees</li> <li>➤ Participatory decision making</li> <li>➤ Open Space Events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Citizens Juries</li> <li>➤ Ballots</li> <li>➤ Delegated Decision</li> </ul>

# 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; from providing advice to co-designing the process or from undertaking some aspects of the engagement to delivering projects themselves.



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

➤ **Who needs to be involved in the planning of your engagement process?**

➤ **What level of participation is it hoped will be achieved?**

➤ **How to identify stakeholders**

➤ **Communications**

➤ **Resources**

➤ **Feedback and next steps**

➤ **Tools to help choose a method**

➤ **Methods**

## What is the purpose?

Before you begin any engagement process, you need to be clear about the purpose. This will help you to select the most appropriate and meaningful engagement methods to use. Setting out your aims is an important step which ensures that you have a clear understanding of why you are engaging with people. 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.

## 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. As illustrated in the Spectrum of Community Engagement, each of the levels of engagement will be appropriate in particular circumstances, and will achieve different results. (*Community Places: [communityplanningtoolkit.org](http://communityplanningtoolkit.org)*)

## Case Study Tobacco Free Generations'

This project began as an event to raise awareness about No Smoking Day, stimulate smokers into action and highlight services that smokers could access should they wish to quit.

The event consisted of a series of workshops for smokers and their families in Fauldhouse. One of the local primary schools developed a Stop Smoking Play which they performed to their community. The following year the school held their own initiative for No Smoking Day which led to funding being sourced for them to develop a tobacco education resource which would support the Curriculum for Excellence. A group of Primary 6 pupils were approached to develop this resource in Partnership with Firefly Arts. As well as developing this resource the pupils were keen to make this a community issue and embarked on a range of activities to engage with the local community to raise awareness of smoking and its associated dangers. This was achieved through local exhibitions, including one in the main shopping centre in Livingston where young people dressed up and spoke to members of the public about smoking related issues. The pupils engaged with over

200 people through these events, in ways they felt most effective. They delivered talks to their school community about the effects of tobacco impacting on several members of their families who have now stopped smoking. The pupils have also embarked on a campaign to make their local play park a smoke free zone, and have the support of their local councillor, and council officers responsible for play parks.

This project has demonstrated the power of the involvement of young people in tackling this significant public health issue and the effectiveness of their engagement with the public to working towards supporting their community to change their behaviour.



## 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 in identifying community stakeholders, their particular interests and needs and how best to engage with them. Issues to consider include;

- What impact the issue or proposals will have on these stakeholder interests?
- Who represents these groups?
- Are there existing community networks or forms of communication?
- Are their gaps in information which could be plugged through local knowledge?
- Relevant equality legislation

There are many groups, organisations and individuals that represent a whole range of interests in West Lothian. These might include;

- Local residents or area based groups
- Communities of Interest
- Faith Based groups
- Local community groups
- Voluntary groups
- Service Users
- Web based or virtual groups

## 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 stakeholders
- Background information on briefing papers on the issue(s) or plan proposals
- Communication & promotion – venues, transport, childcare, translation
- Publication and printing of materials
- Resourcing local and voluntary groups to support people in understanding and responding to information and proposals; convene meetings; be involved in conversations; attending meetings and events.

*The Guildford Community Engagement Strategy has a useful checklist for involvement which can be found here:*

[http://www.guildford.gov.uk/media/10373/Guildford-Community-Engagement-Strategy-2011/pdf/Guildford\\_Community\\_Engagement\\_Strategy\\_2011.pdf](http://www.guildford.gov.uk/media/10373/Guildford-Community-Engagement-Strategy-2011/pdf/Guildford_Community_Engagement_Strategy_2011.pdf)

## Ensuring Diversity & Being Inclusive

Inclusiveness is a key principle of community engagement therefore it is important that engagement activities reflect the diversity of West Lothian's population. There are groups in the community who are traditionally more difficult to engage; these are sometimes referred to as 'hard to reach'. There are also the individuals who are referred to as the 'usual suspects' – those who regularly are involved in consultation or community activity. It is important to ensure that these groups of people are engaged with in the most appropriate way and aren't marginalised as a result of their involvement (or lack of) in community activities.

Matching methods to people 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 just the usual suspects and the hard to reach, and leaving everybody else out.<sup>3</sup>

## Things to consider

- ✓ Think creatively about ways to access these groups. This could be through informal networks, social venues or local organisations who work with these groups.
- ✓ Take measures that will help overcome the barriers that prevent these groups 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, using a questionnaire with those who have literacy needs isn't a good idea; or holding a meeting for mums at school pick up time would not be suitable.

### Groups that are more difficult to reach might be;

Asylum Seekers, young people, drug users, faith communities, homeless people, minority ethnic communities, offenders, older people, people with disabilities, people with mental health problems, single parents, travellers, victims of domestic abuse, people with learning difficulties, gay, lesbian and bi-sexual men and women, transsexual and transgendered people



## Overcoming barriers to engagement

When planning an engagement process you need to recognise diversity, identify potential barriers and design the process to minimise barriers 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 to remove these barriers.

Potential barriers	Design issues to consider
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The capacity and ability of different stakeholders, groups and individuals to participate</li> <li>➤ 'Hard to reach' groups such as young people, older people, minority groups or socially excluded groups</li> <li>➤ Levels of community infrastructure</li> <li>➤ Rural isolation</li> <li>➤ Gaps in information</li> <li>➤ Literacy and numeracy levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Techniques and engagement methods to be used</li> <li>➤ Need for independent facilitation</li> <li>➤ Location and accessibility of venue</li> <li>➤ Number and type of engagement events</li> <li>➤ Transport requirements</li> <li>➤ Childcare needs</li> <li>➤ Format and content of communication and publicity material</li> <li>➤ Use of interpreters and signers</li> </ul>

## Case Study *Fire & Rescue Community Engagement*

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service engages closely with partner agencies, volunteer organisations and members of the public to identify those most vulnerable within our communities at risk from fire and unintentional harm. In doing so we are able to provide education and support through the delivery of our Home Fire Safety Visit Programme.

This includes the installation of free smoke detection, and in some cases additional measures designed to protect householders. Referrals for Home Fire Safety Visits are generated through social work, telecare providers, Police, NHS staff and frontline council staff. The programme is delivered by our frontline operational staff and our specialist Community Action Team. An example of how this community engagement process is put into practice was demonstrated recently when our frontline crews and Community Action Teams crews attended a number of NHS flu clinics that were being run across West Lothian. Our staff attended these events and provided fire safety education to the attendees and also gathered Home Fire Safety referrals.

Our staff also delivered advice on behalf of our partners in Trading Standards, particularly in relation to bogus callers and scam prevention. Through this process we were able to engage directly with several hundred individuals and gathered 180 Home Fire Safety Referrals.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service also interacts with schools, youth groups and diversionary projects in order to contribute towards reducing antisocial behaviour. This includes the delivery of seasonal specific targeted schools programmes which are delivered by our operational crews and Community Action Teams. We also run a number of diversionary Youth Engagement programmes designed to provide early and effective intervention, enhance life skills, develop and promote good citizenship and build confidence.

In addition, we work closely with local youth organisations and groups, and proactively support community events in order to develop a close relationship with the communities in which we serve. An example of such activities include allowing community groups to use fire service facilities to hold meetings and events. This not only provides free facilities to the groups, but encourages the development of working relationships between the various groups attendees and our staff. The delivery of our Youth Engagements programmes also provide an environment for our staff to meet up with youths and their families on a face to face basis. Once again this promotes positive relationships between SFR staff and members of the community.



# The National Standards for Community Engagement

The National Standards for Community Engagement provide a framework upon which community engagement should be based. They set out best practice guidelines for engagement between communities and public agencies.

## 1 The Involvement Standard

We will identify and involve the people and organisations with an interest in the focus of the engagement.

## 2 The Support Standard

We will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement.

## 3 The Planning Standard

We will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken.

## 4 The Methods Standard

We will agree and use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose.

## 5 The Working Together Standard

We will agree and use clear procedures to enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently.

## 6 The Sharing Information Standard

We will ensure necessary information is communicated between the participants.

## 7 The Working with Others Standard

We will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement.

## 8 The Improvement Standard

We will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants.

## 9 The Feedback Standard

We will feedback the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected.

## 10 The Monitoring and Evaluation Standard

We will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement meets its purposes and the national standards for community engagement.

## Case Study *Homeless Housing Network Group*

The Homeless Housing Network Group (HHNG) is a panel of tenants who, prior to securing their own tenancy were homeless or threatened with homelessness and received input from Housing Need Service. The aim of the group is to harness the experiences of people who have been either homeless or threatened with homelessness and use their knowledge to improve and make changes to existing services and processes. The group meet on a monthly basis and these meetings are facilitated through Housing Need Service and include representation by management at every meeting to answer any questions of the group.

The group have developed a work plan, which sets out how they will carry out inspections and desk top audits on the service. As a result of these inspections, findings are presented to the management team and an action plan is created to meet the recommendations of the group.

The Tenant Participation Team supports the Network and this offers opportunities to engage with other Local Authorities and attend events on participation. As a result of the input of this group, the service has made positive changes to improve the experience for individuals who use this service. This process has also had a positive effect on the participants in the group. The group liaise and coordinate with Care Inspectorate inspections and participate and encourage others to participate in developing the homeless service. The group has previously received the Francis Nelson Award for their Tenant Led Inspection of the Homeless Service.

The group is a great example of how positive engagement with service users has resulted in genuine participation and involvement in the way a service is developed and delivered.

# Effective communication skills for engagement

An important part of any community engagement activity is good communication. Whatever level of engagement you are looking to achieve; informing, consulting or involving, good communication skills are vital. To get the most out of your community engagement activity, it is worth 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 we 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, enhance people's willingness to get involved and result in a positive engagement experience. Some effective facilitation points are listed below ;<sup>5</sup>

- ▶ 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 discussion moving.<sup>6</sup> Good use of questions will help to bring structure to the engagement activity.

## Useful resources;

- 🔗 *The Involve guide: 'Making Community Engagement informal & Fun' provides some useful listening and questioning techniques. (Appendix 5) <http://www.involve.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Not-Another-Consultation.pdf>*
- 🔗 *Better Community Engagement; A framework for learning: <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/1046/0055390.pdf>*

## Case Study *Early Years in Blackburn*

The Blackburn Early Years Group (BEYAG) is a local early years action group made up of local workers and volunteers who work or volunteer within the Blackburn early years public, private and voluntary sector.

The group meet monthly to share practice, knowledge and skills and to coordinate activities. To make sure their activities meet the needs of the local community, the group undertake community engagement when developing their action plan for the area.

The engagement approach that the group used was the H diagram tool. This was delivered on a one to one basis, using the H diagram tool to gather individual's views on what they like, what could be better and ideas for improvement. Engagement was undertaken by a whole range of individuals; midwives, health visitors, community workers, volunteers and community members in a variety of locations; including voluntary organisations, private

childcare, key community groups, outside nurseries, the Mill Centre – all with families with pre-school children that live, work or access services within the Blackburn community.

A2 size visuals were designed to report on the findings of the engagement and were used to help local people prioritise what was most important for them. A findings workshop was held to give local people an opportunity to look at the findings and add their ideas for improvement. This process has helped the Blackburn Early Years Group develop an action plan that truly reflects the needs of the community, through a process which has genuinely involved local people.



<sup>4</sup> Manchester Community Engagement Toolkit <sup>5</sup> Manchester Community Engagement Toolkit

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.involve.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Not-Another-Consultation.pdf>

# Feedback & Evaluation

One aspect of community engagement that can discredit the process is lack of feedback to participants.

It is important to inform them of how their views have been taken into account, the broad findings from the process and what has happened as a result of the engagement.



Providing good quality, timely feedback is necessary to making sure that participants feel that their views have been listened to and taken into account. If people feel their views have been considered then they are more likely to continue to participate in engagement activities and see this as a 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.

It should be set out at the start when and how feedback will be provided, and what form this will take. When and how you feedback to participants will depend upon the nature of the engagement.

A range of feedback techniques should be used to make sure you reach a variety of participants. Feedback should provide the participant with information but also offer an opportunity to ask questions or get additional information.

## Feedback methods

- Writing letters, either paper or through email
- Providing summary reports of meetings, events or workshops
- Workshops to feedback information
- Presentations to groups
- Publishing newsletters or posters
- Using websites to post information
- Using local media to communicate information
- Using social media

## Feeding back to participants will:

- Encourage people to participate
- Improve relations between organisations and communities
- Build trust and confidence in the engagement process

- Empower individuals and communities
- Promote ongoing dialogue between organisations and communities

## Evaluation

It is important that any engagement process is evaluated in order to learn what worked well, what didn't work and why. For example, evaluation will provide useful information on the best methods for engaging with groups in a particular area or most appropriate venues. This information should influence future community engagement processes.

Evaluation arrangements should be set out at the start of the engagement process. Key pointers for evaluation are;

- Be clear about the aims of your engagement process so you can evaluate whether or not these have been met.
- Make sure you ask participants, staff, groups and any others involved in the process what they think; Ask if they think the process did what it set out to do and how they found the engagement experience.
- Make use of evaluation forms to gather information from participants about the 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.

*More information on how to carry out effective evaluation of community engagement can be found in the resources below.*

- <http://www.qld.gov.au/web/community-engagement/guides-fact-sheets/documents/engaging-queenslanders-evaluating.pdf>
- <http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/voice/>
- <http://www.manchesterbeacon.org/files/manchester-beacon-pe-evaluation-guide.pdf>
- <http://www.involve.org.uk/evaluation-guide/index.shtml>

# Community Engagement Tools & Methods

The following section provides guidance on the different methods and techniques that can be used to engage with communities. They have been split into three categories; **INFORM**, **CONSULT** and **ENGAGE** so that it is clear what methods can be used to achieve different levels of engagement.

For each, we have given a brief description, outlined the benefits and weaknesses and where appropriate, provided links to useful resources. This section will give you some ideas about the different ways to engage people to get the most out of your engagement activity. This is not an exhaustive list; there are many other tools and methods available.

**More detailed information on a wider range of methods can be found in the following toolkits and guides.**

 **The Scottish Governments Community Engagement How to Guide:**  
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/engage/HowToGuide/Techniques>

 **Engaging Queenslanders: A guide to community engagement methods and techniques**  
<http://www.qld.gov.au/web/community-engagement/guides-factsheets/documents/engaging-queenslanders-methods-and-techniques.pdf>

 **Manchester Community Engagement Toolkit**  
[http://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/download/172/community\\_engagement\\_toolkit](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/download/172/community_engagement_toolkit)

 **Community Planning Toolkit: Community Engagement**  
<http://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/sites/default/files/Engagement.pdf>

 **Argyll & Bute Better Community Engagement Resource Pack:**  
<http://www.aloscotland.com/alo/viewresource.htm?id=348>

## Tools & Methods to INFORM

### Fact Sheets/Newsletter

#### What is it?

- Provide information about a local area or particular project in a paper or on line format.
- One of the cheapest and cost effective methods of keeping people informed.
- A useful complement to other forms of engagement.
- Can be used to inform the community about developments in their area.

#### Benefits

- 😊 If distributed regularly, can build community awareness and understanding

- 😊 Effective means of developing and sustaining interest through a community
- 😊 Can be developed in a format that appeals to a target group
- 😊 Cost effective

#### Weaknesses

- 😞 May not be accessible to people with low levels of literacy or visual impairment
- 😞 People may not take time to read it

#### Useful links

 **Producing a Newsletter:** [http://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/download/172/community\\_engagement\\_toolkit](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/download/172/community_engagement_toolkit)

### Web based information processes

#### What is it?

- A variety of web based processes are available to choose from which gives people the opportunity to get involved at different levels.
- Websites provide a way for organisations to provide information to the public.
- Online methods can be used as standalone processes or as part of a wider engagement activity.

#### Benefits

- 😊 People can choose a convenient time and place to participate
- 😊 Particularly useful for those who may be homebound e.g. elderly, carers, parents with young children
- 😊 Can create debate and exchange of views

- 😊 Cost effective
- 😊 Can reach large numbers of people
- 😊 Less time consuming than attending a workshop or meeting

#### Weaknesses

- 😞 Some techniques may require a moderator to manage comments-this can be expensive and time consuming
- 😞 Excludes those without access to the internet
- 😞 Needs to be publicised to generate activity
- 😞 Some people may feel intimidated

#### Useful links

 <http://www.digitalengagement.info/>

 <http://www.biglunchextras.com/resources/guide-social-media-and-websites>

## Street Stalls & Displays

### What is it?

- Use of highly visual materials to get a particular message or information across a range of audiences.
- Displays are normally set up in local community areas like community centres, shopping centres, libraries.
- Useful for informing the public and stimulating discussion on issues.

### Benefits

- 😊 Can collect the views of large numbers of people
- 😊 Interactive
- 😊 Engages and generates interest
- 😊 Can reach people who may not normally participate

## Shop Fronts

### What is it?

- Shop fronts 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.
- Need to be effectively located to target a large audience.
- Staffed by knowledgeable and approachable staff.

### Weaknesses

- 😞 Can generate a large amount of data
- 😞 Requires advance planning and preparation
- 😞 Requires several facilitators to engage with people
- 😞 Event may be affected by weather conditions
- 😞 If people can't attend on that day, they will miss it

### Useful links

- 🔗 <http://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/sites/default/files/engagement.pdf>

### Benefits

- 😊 Increases visibility and accessibility of project/topic
- 😊 Easily accessible for community members
- 😊 Provide a venue/physical space for local people

### Weaknesses

- 😞 Expensive to establish
- 😞 Requires resources in terms of staff and venue
- 😞 Access could be an issue depending on opening hours

## Tools & Methods to CONSULT

## Public Meetings

### What is it?

- Provide an opportunity to consult large numbers of people. They are open to all, offering an opportunity for people to ask questions and discuss issues.
- Often opportunities for participants to set or influence the agenda and to ask questions.
- As part of a series of events they can be a valuable way of sharing information and demonstrating openness and transparency.

### Benefits

- 😊 Enables large numbers of people to have their say
- 😊 Provides an opportunity to explain processes, give information and gather feedback
- 😊 Demonstrates openness and transparency
- 😊 Can attract publicity or can be used as a launch event
- 😊 Enables participants to develop networks
- 😊 Face to face meetings humanise organisations and authorities in public eyes

### Weaknesses

- 😞 Unlikely to be representative – not everyone has the time or inclination to attend
- 😞 Attendance is often low unless people feel personally or deeply concerned
- 😞 Some people are likely to be inhibited from speaking in a large group
- 😞 Traditional formats can limit audience contribution and lead to conflict
- 😞 If confrontational it may lead to poor media publicity

### Useful links

- 🔗 <http://www.unlockdemocracy.org.uk/guides/entry/how-to-hold-a-public-meeting>
- 🔗 <http://www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/organising-a-public-meeting/>

## Surveys & Questionnaires

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### What is it?

- Most widely used consultation method.
- Undertaken to identify needs and views of a large number of people in a standard format.
- 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; piloting the survey; undertaking the survey and post-completion analysis of the results.
- Often best to use a short and concise questionnaire where people's views on an issue are being sought.
- Good way of collecting quantitative and qualitative information from local people at a certain point in time.
- Surveys can be completed through face to face interviews, self-completion written forms, over the telephone, or electronically over the internet or email.
- Surveys often best used as part of a programme of other methods – by themselves they can sometimes be limited.

### Benefits

- 😊 Can gain the views of a large number of people
- 😊 Useful for obtaining quantitative data
- 😊 In principle data can be compared over time or with results from elsewhere
- 😊 Useful for identifying and evidencing need

### Weaknesses

- 😞 Need to be well designed and coded to get 'usable' answers
- 😞 Large questionnaire surveys are time consuming and labour intensive
- 😞 Information may be limited
- 😞 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

### Useful links

🔗 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/engage/HowToGuide/Techniques>

🔗 [https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/7363131/creating\\_a\\_questionnaire.pdf](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/7363131/creating_a_questionnaire.pdf)

## Web based consultation

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### What is it?

- As well as being used to provide information (as described in the previous section) the internet offers a range of opportunities for individuals to engage in decision making processes.
- Online consultation is one tool which 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 discussion boards, we can get a better insight into the thoughts and ideas of people who may not participate in other ways.

### Benefits

- 😊 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
- 😊 Anonymous nature may increase participation

### Weaknesses

- 😞 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

### Useful links

🔗 <http://www.digitalengagement.info/>

🔗 <http://www.biglunchextras.com/resources/guide-social-media-and-websites>

## Consultation Documents

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### What is it?

- Regularly used for formal consultation by local authorities and other government bodies to seek formal responses from statutory consultees.
- A document which allows whoever is consulting on a particular issue to set out in detail the whole of a situation and set specific questions.
- Provides an opportunity to provide detailed background information on a particular proposal or issue.
- Most consultation documents are document based, although web based consultation is increasing.
- If carrying out a document based consultation process, it is a good idea to offer a web based alternative that enables participants to navigate directly to the parts of the document that are relevant to them.
- The use of diagrams and illustrations rather than text is preferable. The number of questions should be kept to a minimum and every question asked should serve a specific purpose.

### Benefits

- 😊 A written document allows the consulters to set out in detail the whole picture and ask specific questions
- 😊 A document can also be used to explain complexity and provide background information
- 😊 Paper based consultation is safe and predictable
- 😊 Web based processes allow comments on documents and responses to questions to be displayed in full

### Weaknesses

- 😞 The sheer size and detail in a document can have a negative effect on the people being consulted
- 😞 People are reluctant to read long documents
- 😞 A large number of responses can be labour intensive to collate and analyse

## Citizens Panels

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### What is it?

- Representative sample of people from a local area who sign up to be involved in various consultation activities.
- Provide a 'ready-made' sample of people to consult or engage with.
- Panels normally involve around 1000-2000 local people

### Benefits

- 😊 Using the same panel a number of times reduces recruitment 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 made representative of the local population

### Weaknesses

- 😞 People on the panel become more knowledgeable (and therefore less representative) than the general public over time
- 😞 A turnover of the panel may reduce the validity of tracking over time
- 😞 Information provided may mean responses are not an accurate reflection of opinion among the less informed.

### Useful links

- 🔗 <http://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/cityvoice/>
- 🔗 <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/community-engagement>

## Workshops

### What is it?

- Workshops and focus groups allow people to discuss their ideas in an open and relaxed atmosphere.
- Can take a variety of different formats, depending on the topic for discussion.
- They can be designed to exchange information; to discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of an idea or project; to obtain ideas and innovative thinking for a way forward for a project; or they can be specifically geared towards prioritisation and the production of an action plan.
- Focus groups by contrast are designed to specifically concentrate on a single issue or a programme of topics.

### Benefits

- 😊 Encourages active discussion in a welcoming environment
- 😊 Time and resource efficient way of identifying and clarifying key issues

- 😊 Conflict can be more easily handled in a small group
- 😊 Can be designed for a specific purpose
- 😊 Can be directly targeted at excluded or 'hard to reach' groups

### Weaknesses

- 😞 With small groups, it is difficult to be sure all stakeholders or interests are represented
- 😞 Workshops can be dominated by articulate and confident individuals if not carefully facilitated
- 😞 Requires experienced facilitators

### Useful links

- 🔗 <http://www.ketso.com/learn-about-ketso>

## Planning for Real

### What is it?

- Practical technique involving a 3D architectural model of an area which is used to help participants decide what improvements/changes need to be made to their local area.
- Local residents are involved in creating the model.
- The model can be displayed in public venues to generate interest and discussion.
- Cards/cut-outs that represent services and physical assets are made available so individuals can place appropriate suggestions and changes on the model itself.
- These details are then fed back to people, discussed further and prioritised at public meetings or small group discussions.

### Benefits

- 😊 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

### Weaknesses

- 😞 Can generate ideas which are not possible to implement
- 😞 Preparing for the event can be time consuming
- 😞 The card count can be seen as conclusive and may cause conflict particularly if there is a disagreement

### Useful links

- 🔗 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/engage/HowToGuide/PlanningforReal>
- 🔗 <http://www.planningforreal.org.uk/>

## Community Fairs/Events

### What is it?

- Provide a fun, informal atmosphere that will attract a wide ranging audience.
- Provides various opportunities to inform and engage participants about local issues using different methods.
- Should incorporate a range of activities and events to cater for the broadest possible audience.
- As well as distributing information, a fair provides a range of opportunities for consultation and involvement.
- Community events work best if a number of organisations in the community get together to run one.

### Benefits

- 😊 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

### Weaknesses

- 😞 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

### Useful links

- 🔗 <http://www.biglunchextras.com/resources/guide-community-engagement>
- 🔗 <http://www.involve.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Not-Another-Consultation.pdf>
- 🔗 <http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/sites/default/files/community-event-toolkit.pdf>

## Asset Based Community Engagement

### What is it?

- Uses 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 assets, facilities, transport and business to develop a snapshot of an area.
- Increases understanding of assets in its broadest sense; not just about the physical assets but the people, groups and skills that exist in a community.

### Benefits

- 😊 Stimulates discussion
- 😊 Can build a sense of community ownership
- 😊 Can help people see and understand their community in different ways

### Weaknesses

- 😞 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

### Useful links

- 🔗 <http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/assets-scotland/>
- 🔗 <http://scottishparticipatoryinitiatives.co.uk/>
- 🔗 <http://www.coproductionscotland.org.uk/>

## World Cafes

### What is it?

- Aim to gather the views of participants in a comfortable and informal setting, much like a café.
- Informal setting stimulates creative conversations.
- Set up room to look like a café, using small tables, tablecloths and provide food.
- Discussions take place in small groups. The tablecloths are used to take notes and make comments. Each group feeds back to the facilitator at the end of each question discussion.
- Participants move around the tables in order to discuss each discussion topic.

### Benefits

- 😊 Informal atmosphere created which encourages conversation

- 😊 Flexible
- 😊 Less formal than a public meeting
- 😊 Easier to get people to attend

### Weaknesses

- 😞 Potential for raising expectations
- 😞 Success can be dependent on the questions set
- 😞 No qualitative data

### Useful links

- 🔗 <http://www.theworldcafe.com/method.html>
- 🔗 [http://www.scottishhealthcouncil.org/patient\\_public\\_participation/participation\\_toolkit/world\\_cafe.aspx](http://www.scottishhealthcouncil.org/patient_public_participation/participation_toolkit/world_cafe.aspx)

## Open Space Events

### What is it?

- 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 will have a set theme but no fixed programme or agenda.
- The event begins with participants sitting or standing in a circle, 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 sign up to sessions they are interested in.
- Participants can move from one session to another as they see fit.
- Fluid and unstructured approach.

### Benefits

- 😊 Increases skills of participants
- 😊 Promotes empowerment and ownership
- 😊 Breaks down traditional 'them' and 'us' barriers
- 😊 No fixed agenda – structure and content shaped by participants
- 😊 Good for addressing difficult issues

### Weaknesses

- 😞 Limited control
- 😞 Danger of not recording information correctly
- 😞 As they are 'one-off' events, people may miss out

### Useful links

- 🔗 <http://www.openspaceworld.org/>
- 🔗 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/engage/HowToGuide/OpenSpaceEvents>

## Appreciative Inquiry

### What is it?

- 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 the questions and then these are used to gather information from the wider community.
- The findings from the process are then looked at, pulled together collectively by the community to create a plan for the future.

### Benefits

- 😊 It includes people who normally don't take part, involving 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

### Weaknesses

- 😞 Does not address problems
- 😞 Ensuring consistency of approach by interviewers

### Useful links

- 🔗 <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/94257/0094033.pdf>

## Citizens Juries

### What is it?

- A group of citizens who are representative of the general public 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 will present their recommendations/decision to the public or local authority.
- A high level of skill is required as participants are often asked to analyse complex issues.

### Benefits

- 😊 Empowering experience for those involved
- 😊 Can result in obtaining informed 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 thinks

### Weaknesses

- 😞 Representativeness 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
- 😞 The sponsoring body has to be prepared to accept the results or else the process loses credibility

### Useful links

- 🔗 <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/effective-engagement/toolkit/tool-citizen-juries>
- 🔗 <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph9/chapter/glossary/#/citizens-juries>

# Useful resources

## **Not another consultation: Making Community Engagement informal and fun**

<http://www.involve.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Not-Another-Consultation.pdf>

## **Community Planning Toolkit: Community Engagement**

<http://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/sites/default/files/Engagement.pdf>

## **The Scottish Government Community Engagement How To Guide**

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/engage/HowToGuide>

## **Better Community Engagement (Scottish Community Development Centre)**

[http://www.scdc.org.uk/media/resources/what-we-do/better-comm-engage/better\\_community\\_engagement.pdf](http://www.scdc.org.uk/media/resources/what-we-do/better-comm-engage/better_community_engagement.pdf)

## **Herefordshire Council Guidance Note: Best Practice Community Engagement Techniques**

[https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/6312587/12\\_best\\_practice\\_community\\_engagement\\_techniques.pdf](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/6312587/12_best_practice_community_engagement_techniques.pdf)

## **Guilford Community Engagement Strategy**

[http://www.guilford.gov.uk/media/10373/Guilford-Community-Engagement-Strategy-2011/pdf/Guilford\\_Community\\_Engagement\\_Strategy\\_2011.pdf](http://www.guilford.gov.uk/media/10373/Guilford-Community-Engagement-Strategy-2011/pdf/Guilford_Community_Engagement_Strategy_2011.pdf)

## **Dialogue by Design Handbook**

[http://designer.dialoguebydesign.net/docs/Dialogue\\_by\\_Design\\_Handbook.pdf](http://designer.dialoguebydesign.net/docs/Dialogue_by_Design_Handbook.pdf)

## **National Standards for Community Engagement**

<http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards/>

## **Making it Meaningful: Involving Communities in Community Planning**

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/engage/HowToGuide/LearningPoint1>

## **Argyll & Bute Better Community Engagement Resource Pack 2012**

<http://www.aloscotland.com/alo/viewresource.htm?id=348>

## **The Scottish Health Council Participation Toolkit**

[http://www.scottishhealthcouncil.org/patient\\_public\\_participation/participation\\_toolkit/the\\_participation\\_toolkit.aspx](http://www.scottishhealthcouncil.org/patient_public_participation/participation_toolkit/the_participation_toolkit.aspx)

## **Big Lunch Extras**

<http://www.biglunchextras.com/>

## **Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement (VOiCE)**

<http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/voice/>

## **National Co-ordinating centre for public engagement**

<http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/>





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- › West Lothian Council
- › Disability West Lothian
- › Optima Scotland
- › West Lothian Youth Action Project
- › Police Scotland
- › West Lothian Chamber of Commerce
- › Citizens Advice Bureau
- › Family & Community Development West Lothian
- › Scottish Fire & Rescue Service
- › Kirknewton Community Development Trust



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[www.communityplanningtoolkit.org](http://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org)