

Lancaster district

Community Engagement Guidance

TOOLKIT



Engaging with specific groups

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Children and young people

Young people are today's citizens. They represent an integral part of every community. Children and young people in the Lancaster district form almost one third of the total population and use or are impacted by the majority of services we offer; we must encourage young people to express their views, to be heard and to be involved. The Children Act reflects this as well as the UN Convention on the rights of a child. In accordance with the recommendation of the UN Committee, they ran a series of consultations, both with the NGO sector and with children and young people during February 2007 including children and young people considered 'hard-to-reach'. These included meetings with young people with a disability, who have left care, have special needs, are gay, lesbian or bi-sexual, have been in conflict with the law or in alternative education provision. Consultations were conducted across Northern Ireland. A report on the consultations carried out can be viewed below. A young people's version of the report has also been produced and can be viewed below.

[UN Convention on the rights of the Child - Consultation with Children and Young People \(PDF 673 KB\)](#)

[UN Convention on the rights of the Child - Consultation with Children and Young People - Young People's version \(PDF 567 KB\)](#)

It is essential that children and young peoples strategic partnerships, children and young people's trust arrangements, which will commission services for children and young people and other local service providers consider the needs and aspirations of young people and that we involve them in decisions that affect their lives.

What are the main issues regarding consultation as far as young people are concerned?

1. It can feel patronising

Speak in a language that they understand although try not to be patronising. Consider who you are asking and adapt the language according to the young persons age and ability.

2. There is often no feed back

It is really important to tell them what has happened with their views if we want to keep people involved. If we can not do anything with their ideas, we need to explain the reasons why. This is as important as telling them what has happened.

3. Young people able to choose method of consultation

4. Treat young people like adults

Nobody, whatever their age, wants to feel they are being talked down to and we need to remember that we are asking their views because they know or have opinions on the topic.

5. Young people want to have access to full documents where they are being asked to comment on policy etc.

6. Young people are not able to access events etc because of times to suit adults -i.e. weekdays 9-5 when most young people are in school, college or at work.

It is important to have meetings at appropriate times – we must think about the people we are expecting to come to a meeting and ensure that it is not too late if they are young children but not held during the day when children and young people are at school and college.

7. Stereotyping - adults not recognising that young people are individuals

8. Lack of respect from some adults

9. Many young people don't feel listened to

This cannot happen on its own because if we just listen nothing will happen. This needs to work in partnership with the above. However it is important that we listen rather than the old saying 'children should be seen and not heard'.

10. Young people want to be involved at all levels/stages of the process, not just at the end

11. Do not use young people just to tick the box

Other things to consider:

- Consider the right approach for different ages and if in fact it would be appropriate to consult young people on the particular issue at all e.g. sex education
- Consider asking for parental permission
- Make sure you have skilled, knowledgeable and friendly workers – it goes without saying that if the staff working with children and young people do not have the skills to allow them to explore and give their views it will not work as well. Effective communication will work best when based on a trusting relationship between the children and young people and those asking them
- Translate into real life, real words and make it relevant for them
- Make it active for young people to take part – if it is fun or interactive young people will enjoy the work more and be more inclined to attend and engage
- Have meeting in appropriate places – transport is often cited by young people as an issue so having meetings in places which are easy to access will improve attendance
- Provide refreshments – if you are inviting young people to a meeting or an event it is important to provide some refreshments, as we would expect when we go to meetings
- Allow them to explore their views without imposing yours – it is important that young people are allowed to explore what they think giving them as broad a spectrum of information for them to consider and make informed choices
- Make sure you understand what they are saying – we need to ensure that we have understood what is being said by the people we are asking. This can be done by simply telling the person or group you are asking what your understanding is and ask if they agree
- Do something about what they say – ensure that if you are asking the views of children and young people, you are able to consider what they are saying and do something about it or explain why it is not possible
- Reimburse expenses – if we are asking young people to come to meetings or return information via the post to help us improve services we should cover expenses such as postage and bus fare.

If you are going to be working with children and young people under 18 years of age, you **must familiarise yourself** with your **Safeguarding Children Policy**.

The Council has adopted the **Lancashire Children and Young People's Charter for Engagement** which provides guidance on how Services should consult with and engage children and young people and make it possible for them to be involved in meaningful participation in decision making. A copy of the Charter can be obtained from: <http://www.lancashirechildrenstrust.org.uk/enewsviewer/frmDcDnLd.asp?id=6461>

We need to make sure that young people aren't 'consulted out' and that consultation is both meaningful and as wide as possible including 'seldom heard' groups, those who traditionally don't get involved in consultation/participation.

There are some organisations that could help with this:

- Lancashire Young People's Service
- Children's Centres
- YMCA
- Lancashire County Council's Traveller Education Service
- Children Looked After (Children's Social Care)

Groups to consider involving:

- Sign Posts
- Young Lancashire
- Lancaster District Children and Young People Multi-Agency Forum membership
- Lancaster District Children's Trust Partnership
- District Youth Council (run by Lancashire Young People's Service)
- Students Unions
- School Councils
- Local Libraries

Lancashire is committed to children and young people being empowered; participating in the services they receive and the communities in which they live.

Lancashire Children & Young People's Trust - Strategic Lead for CYP Participation – Hannah Peake can be contacted for further help and advice. Hannah.peake@lancashire.gov.uk

You can view further information:-

<http://www.lancashirechildrenstrust.org.uk/resources/?siteid=6274&pageid=40031>

Lancashire Children & Young Peoples Trust Board endorsed the Active Participation Strategy, in June 2011, this sets out LCYPT commitment to implementing a common approach for the participation of children and young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of services and priorities. The strategy is supported by a participation checklist and a number of 'How to...' guides, which offer practical guidance in developing and embedding participative practices.

Student Community

Face to face interviews were carried out with 50 Lancaster University students (2009). The majority of students were aged between 16 and 24.

The majority of students had been involved with Lancaster University and a small percentage had been involved with NHS North Lancashire.

The Students had a positive involvement experience when:

- Event was held in handy/convenient location
- Issue/subject area interested them
- Getting involved felt worthwhile
- They liked/approved the method of involvement
- Transport was made available
- They were happy with feedback

The Students preferred way of receiving information was by:

- Internet/email
- Sent to their home e.g. newsletter/magazine
- Local press and media
- Posters

When asked why they thought some organisations did a good job of involving the community, they said the organisations:

- Put a lot of effort in
- Well organised and communicated
- Reached out to people
- Worked with a wide range of people – other than students
- Provided opportunities to meet new people
- Lots of community events involving different age groups
- Took time to collate student opinions
- Offer help to people
- Consider community needs
- Provide activities e.g. fitness

It seemed that many students were not contacted by public bodies (e.g. the police, parish and local councils or the health service).

The students recognised the many benefits for more involvement by local people. The majority felt uninvolved; one student's comment was 'hard to get involved as a student'.

Many didn't know if they were involved in decision making in regard to the provision of public services and in matters affecting local life. The majority of students did not give any improvement suggestions or ways they would like to get involved with the community. Two suggestions were financial incentives and social activities. A very small percentage said they would like to get involved in environmental, arts and regeneration, youth groups or volunteering.

Children with disabilities

Overcoming communication difficulties is hard but not impossible. It starts with treating the child as an individual and seeing past the disability. Go into the child's world and try and understand the frustration and anger that is felt by being unable to express themselves and what they need.

Consultation with children with disabilities is not easy or quick and it has to be remembered that any consultation will take a lot of time and patience and this needs to be taken into account when planning any consultations.

Many children and young people come into contact with a lot of professionals and this can become a barrier for interaction and consultation.

Building trust and relationships also work towards understanding children and young people better, and it is important to show the child that you want to communicate with them and you want to hear what they have to say. Be open and honest, this will help the child to feel more comfortable with you. By learning together this will help the child to feel secure and relaxed. By being genuine you are showing a little vulnerability that can put the child at ease and gives them a sense that you want to communicate with them as much as they want to be heard. Show respect to the child and the challenges they face.

Communication can be encouraged by talking to the child and encouraging them to use communication tools. They can also be encouraged by using such tools whenever you communicate with them. Make sure that you understand their form of communication because if you don't, this could cause more confusion and frustration.

Listen to what the child has to say and let them talk for as long as they want. Paraphrase what they have said to clarify it is what they meant. Ask the child open questions and lead them into conversation. Talk about what they are interested in. Make sure that you are not the reason the child does not wish to communicate. If the child is more comfortable communicating with another member of staff let that person take over, because it is the child's communication that is paramount.

Looking at the child's background will give some understating of the communication difficulties and their preferences. Despite the child's limitations, all children should be included (if they want to be) in group discussions and activities. However if they want one to one attention and it is available then this can encourage communication.

A recent project with children and young people with disabilities (powerful voices network) highlighted that young disabled people's views should be taken into account at the planning stage of all young peoples services. Local young people that they want the same opportunities as everyone else and they want to participate alongside their non disabled peers.

A way of making sure you are targeting the right people is to contact children with disabilities databases as they hold a voluntary register of young people aged 0 to 18 years old with disabilities.

Tools to aid communication of children with disabilities

Many children and young people with disabilities do not use a recognised language format and it is essential to make the most of all available resources in order to help the child make their needs known. Here are some tools that are available to aid the communication of children with disabilities.

- British Sign Language: www.british-sign.co.uk
- Makaton (uses signs and symbols to teach communication, language and literacy skills to people with communication and learning difficulties): <http://makaton.org>
- Widgit (uses symbols instead of text): www.widgit.com
- Clicker (to enable dyslexic readers): www.cricksoft.com
- PECS (to enable those with communication difficulties): www.pecs.com
- Change people (equal rights for disabled people): www.changepeople.co.uk

Older People

Like everyone, the older people in the Lancaster district appreciate plain English and honesty. They expect a realistic appraisal of issues and do not wish for unrealistic expectations to be encouraged.

Our research showed that many people felt too old to get involved. Maybe we need to make it easier for older people to get involved and have their say.

Our research has also shown that older people's communication/involvement method preferences were information sent to their home, press/media, local public meetings and telephone surveys.

Issues that create problems when consultation takes place are:

- Lack of feedback on progress
- Use of jargon and acronyms
- Lack of recognition of the skills and experience that older people bring to the table
- Being involved because people are older: older people want to be involved because an issue is important to them not because they are over 50.

Consider the following when planning engagement with this community:

A range of approaches need to be implemented in order to effectively work with older people¹:

- Start where older people are at – find out what structures or groups are in place that could be approached for feedback on a specific issue
- Do not assume that a gathering of older people want officers from organisations invading their activity e.g. bingo. Find the central contact (e.g. chair of committee, volunteers) and meet with them to discuss ways of consulting the groups that they are involved in
- Work with officers who are already involved with the groups so that appropriate information can be taken that will address older people's queries
- Explain clearly your purpose, why you need older people's views on specific issue and facilitate open feedback session
- Stay in touch with your contacts and feedback on progress
- Create opportunities for a social and informal gathering as part of your activity but be prepared for a more formal session in which everybody gets to give their views
- Truth and honesty is appreciated
- Hold meetings in disabled access buildings
- Seek advice from older people on appropriate venues and how to advertise meetings to appeal to their peers e.g. use large, clear lettering and signs, choose familiar settings (e.g. seniors' clubs, local community centres) where they will feel more comfortable and confident
- Consider carefully start and finish times – older people may not be able to get to early meetings or stay after 3pm and some may prefer not to attend meetings in the evening

- Organise transport if necessary, consider how far away people will have to park and then walk to a venue
- Have paper based information and contact details for people to take away with them
- Give people the opportunity to opt out
- Not all older people have the time or the inclination to be continually invited to meetings
- Speak clearly, but don't patronise by speaking slowly or shouting
- Always speak directly to the older person and not the person they are with (such as a carer or companion)
- Make contact with local radio stations and local newspapers. Using Viewpoint as a way of raising awareness of your activity often gets a good response. Posters and flyers in places where people gather have also proven to be effective
- Be aware of what activities are happening on the same day (e.g. a popular coffee morning may clash with your open event across town). Social events will take precedence for some people as it is the only opportunity that they get to socialise
- Take events to more rural areas of the Lancaster district; don't just focus on traditionally deprived areas
- Consider provision of hearing loops, visual aids etc.

For more hints and tips please refer to - [Help the Aged Consulting and Engaging Older People Guide](#)

Older people could be consulted through established groups such as:-

[Age UK Lancashire](#) – (formerly known as Age Concern) are a countywide charity working with and for older people. Through the services and support they provide, they aim to promote independence, enhance health and wellbeing and enable older people to access the information they need to make informed decisions about their lives.

People with disabilities

Throughout this toolkit, accessibility and diversity are key principles of community engagement. Many people will be disabled at some point in their lives, be it a permanent or temporary disability caused by accident, illness, aging or congenital condition. Impairments may be physical, sensory, neurological, psychiatric, intellectual or other impairments.

Disability is the process that happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world for only their way of living, taking no account of impairments other people have. Society is often built in a way that assumes we can all move quickly from one side of the road to the other, that we can all see signs, read directions, hear announcements, reach buttons, have the strength to open heavy doors and have stable moods and perceptions.

If we plan our services and community engagement well, we can enable all people of the community to be involved in a meaningful way. Often people are left out because we do not provide services and engagement that enables them to attend.

Main barriers can be:

- Prejudice and stereotypes
- Inflexible organisational procedures and practices
- Inaccessible information
- Inaccessible buildings
- Inaccessible transport

Our research has shown that people with disabilities in Lancaster district prefer information to be sent to their homes (newsletters/magazines). Their second preference is to be involved with organisations through telephone surveys and finally postal surveys.

Useful Hints and Tips

- Ensure that all venues for consultation events are fully accessible.
- Ensure that transport is provided where necessary.
- Ensure that all forms of communication meet the needs of the visually impaired, (ie: helpful font size and paper colour etc). The council's Access Officer will be able to assist you.
- Ensure that timing of events is appropriate ie some people may need more time to get ready in the mornings
- Ensure enough time is given for people to consider issues
- Liaise with voluntary and community groups whose members have disabilities.
- Encourage the active participation of carers and advocates.
- Provide appropriate facilities for all meetings (ie Induction loops, sign language facilities etc).
- Attend day centres; residential care homes and community venues and groups with a variety of consultation approaches.
- Always speak directly to the person with disabilities and not the person they are with (such as a carer or companion)
- Sit at the same level, ie eye to eye, when speaking to people

Visually Impaired

Audio

- Galloway's Society for the Blind Morecambe Office has the facilities to record you reading your plan/strategy/questionnaire then they will then distribute it to all the visually impaired people in the district. There is a reasonable charge for this service.
- www.galloways.org.uk/

Braille

- The Galloway's Society Head Quarters at Preston can provide this service.
- www.galloways.org.uk/

Large Print

- Text only, minimum 16 point Production in-house (if designed internally) or arrangement with designer to produce a large print of pdf (if designed externally)

Dyslexic Friendly Formats

- As requested by customer
- Production – In-house, if appropriate.
- Production time – dependent on request

Hard of Hearing

- Face to face interpretation service (British Sign Language providers)
- Action on Hearing Loss (previously Royal National Institute for Deaf People)
- Lancaster and Morecambe Deaf Club may be able to offer advice
- The Council has a contract with Language Line who can provide British Sign Language providers www.language.co.uk
- Interpreters must be booked in advance
- Hearing loops are available at most Lancaster City Council Reception points. (A loop system helps deaf people who use a hearing aid or loop listener hears sounds more clearly because it reduces or cuts out background noise.) A portable loop system is available.

Black & minority ethnic (BME) including faith communities

It is important that community engagement activities are inclusive to accurately reflect the entire community. Different sections of the community, particularly diverse or minority groups may have views or needs that are different from the more vocal majority. These minorities will remain unheard if they are not actively engaged. With many different ethnic groups each with their own languages, traditions and different amount of time settled.

Although the Lancaster district has a very small percentage of local residents from black and ethnic minority communities, it is still important to ensure there is representation from these communities in any discussions around service design and improvement.

According to the 2011 Census around 91.5% of the population are estimated to be White British, with around 6000 people from a black and minority ethnic background (4.4%) and around 4500 (3.3%) from an 'other white' background. In terms of country of origin, the largest numbers of people not born in the UK were born in Poland (1774), China including Hong Kong (1023), India (669) and Ireland (624).

In total just over 10,100 people resident in Lancaster District in 2011 were not born in the UK. And in 2011 12% of births were to non-UK born mothers.

As of the 2011 UK census, 66% of Lancaster District's population reported themselves as Christian, down from 76% a decade ago. 24% reported they had no religion, up from 14% at the last census. In terms of religious minorities, there are 1767 Muslims, 540 Buddhists, 446 Hindus, 119 Jews and 100 Sikhs. The city is covered by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lancaster and the Church of England Diocese of Blackburn.

Consider the following when planning engagement with these communities:

- Don't classify BME groups together. Groups have different needs whether they are due to language or culture
- Be sensitive to differences. Be ready to challenge assumptions that you may bring and learn about different faiths and the cultural background that they have
- Research what BME groups are in your area and attend meetings to develop relationships. Find out how long the communities have been there, what customs and traditions they bring and how many languages are spoken and written in the community you are working in
- Consider recruiting a member of an ethnic minority community to help with the engagement exercise – you could ask them to become a member of your project board
- Connect and build relationships with existing networks of groups and/or help support the development of new ones to address any gaps
- Consider the need for translation of leaflets and the use of translators at meetings
- Explore the opportunities for training to help challenge stereotyping, perceptions and assumptions
- When deciding what refreshments to provide, take into account dietary or other needs of the communities you are inviting. If you are not sure, ask people for their preferences when sending out an invitation
- Try to avoid your engagement activities conflicting with festivals or holy days. Check the faith calendar <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/tools/calendar/>, firstly to make sure your

engagement does not clash with faith days and secondly so that you could build on knowledge on when to engage with groups and what events may be appropriate to link to

- Consider dietary requirements – for example is halal meat, kosher or vegetarian food needed
- Avoid having meetings where alcohol is consumed, for example a pub, a hotel with a bar or a licensed function room.

Some of this information has been developed from Working Together: co-operation between government and faith communities, Home Office unit 2004 and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Translations

Face to face and Written

- Lancaster City Council has a contract with Language Line www.languageline.co.uk

Please note the feedback from Polish community is that Language Line is difficult to use.

Telephone

A minicom/text phone facility is available at Lancaster and Morecambe town halls. The council's minicom number is 01524 582175. (Unlike a standard telephone, a textphone has a keyboard and a display screen. Instead of speaking into a telephone mouthpiece, the customer will type what they want to say using the keyboard and their text appears on the display of the minicom/textphone system at Lancaster or Morecambe Town Hall.

Chinese community

A focus group with the Lancaster and Morecambe Bay Chinese Community Association suggested the below preferences for engaging their community. A translation service was provided.

There was an apparent eagerness within the community to expand and integrate further especially via cultural and arts development.

Consider the following when planning engagement with this community:

- Be aware of Chinese cultural issues
- Using bi-lingual literature and resource whenever directly consulting with this community
- If plan to provide a translator, let people know to take away the concern prior to attending an event
- Be aware of the working lives of the majority of the resident Chinese community. In particular, awareness of the unsocial hours and weekend working rotas
- Take into account cultural considerations which favour the development of small, informal discussion groups over the more open public meetings
- Work with a community representative acting as the “hub” for all involvement activities
- Use more graphics in order to overcome language barriers - especially for the early settlers
- Approach the community with relevant issues for them – make the benefits clear for the Chinese community.

Group rankings of the best ways to communicate

Good Method	Possible Method	Non Effective Method
Small informal discussion groups/own forum	Postal Surveys	Newspapers
Newsletters – for targeted groups Must be Cantonese	TV / Teletext	Local Councillor
Leaflets	Board Meetings via a representative	Interviews in the Home
Posters – in the Community Centre	Exhibitions	Email
Writing in – via a community representative – especially for the “larger” issues	Roadshows	On Line Forums
Community Kitty	Web	On Street Interviews
Local Forums	Voting in Referenda	Citizen panels
		Telephone Interviews
		Texting (SMS)

Newsletters/leaflets

Any printing media will need to be in Cantonese in order to encourage participation. Newsletters and leaflets are good ways of targeting and refining a message to suit group. They need to be well designed and made clear that it is not ‘junk mail’; this could be done by using clear branding.

Posters

Posters can create an interest although their location is key to their success. Rather than using large high street posters, use smaller posters and post in and around Chinese community. Partners could consult the Chinese community on the best locations.

Writing in with comments

A collective response could be developed by community representatives acting on behalf of the majority.

Community Kitty

“This is very good. Let me say up front we are very careful when we receive money we are so careful with it so that we do not abuse this. We spend it to benefit the community”

Quote, Male, 30-50 years

Local Forums

Chinese culture means that the Chinese community do not like to argue a point in a large public arena and favour small discussion forums in venues familiar to the community.

“You’ve got to create a friendly environment where they can speak their mind. They do not like to be too formal. Also not in too big a group”

Quote, Female, 20-30 years

Television/teletext

This is not ideal due to unsociable working hours.

Board/committee meetings

Preference for the community to be represented by a single community member at meetings. Due to cultural and behavioural issues a collective response by a small number of individuals would be accepted by the larger community.

Exhibitions

Potential to be used for bigger projects, although dependent upon:

- Language: Cantonese translation service and materials
- Central location
- Visuals and graphics used

Websites

Important although will not reach whole community. Language options available online make this a viable method.

Postal surveys and voting

Need to be in Cantonese in order to encourage participation.

Non Effective Methods

- Newspapers- this is not a popular medium within the community
 - Local Councillors- most of the group did not have any contact and were not aware who their elected representative was
 - Home Interviews – not appropriate due to shift patterns and unsocial hours (may be asleep during the daytime)
 - On Street Surveys- inconvenient and time consuming - *“You don’t know who they are and you don’t trust who they say they are”*
Quote, Female, 20-30 years
 - Telephone Surveys and Citizens panels - problems relating to privacy issues and in relation to telephone numbers and onward data mining by third party companies

Muslim community

A focus group with members of the Lancaster and Morecambe Muslim community suggested the below preferences for engaging their community.

Consider the following when planning engagement with these communities:

- Targeting the 'key influencers' within each community
- Need to understand and speak to the existing voluntary groups
- Talking to local businesses as a method of expanding the opportunities to reach people
- Providing childcare provision
- Taking your event into the local community (within walking distance)
- Organising evening events (considered the best time)
- Paying transport expenses or organising car share options
- Providing at least 24 hours notice of an event
- Approaching the community with relevant issues for them
- Feeding back is very important. Taking action and feedback encourages future involvement just as no action and feedback would discourage future engagement. "I wrote to several organisations and I never got one reply" and "if you think no one is listening to you there is no point wasting your time".

Group Rankings of the Best Ways to Communicate

Good Method	Possible Method	Non Effective Method
Voting in Referenda	Community Kitty	Text / SMS
Internet/ Email / Website	Mystery Customer	Telephone Surveys
Local Community Group / Parish Council	Social Networking Sites	Citizens Panel
Local Forum	Local Public Meetings	On Street Surveys
Group Discussion	Interview at Home	Postal Surveys
Leaflets	On Line Forums	Write in with Comments
Local Press	Exhibitions / Open Days	Television / Teletext
	Posters	Local Councillor
	Board/Committee Meetings	
	Roadshows	
	Newsletters / Magazines	

Voting in referenda

The group agreed that the principle of voting as a means of engaging with their community was important. Younger participants were unsure of their voting rights.

Internet/email/websites

The group were very keen online users although this may have been a more technically aware group and not be a reflection of the Muslim community as a whole. The group used websites for news updates and emails on a regular basis. The group agreed that this method was important in terms of a feedback mechanism and other information. There was a concern about SPAM emails and software viruses. All were cautious about opening unknown email attachments and would only do so from a known source.

Local community groups/local forums

As the group were from an urban community there was little affinity with parish councils. The group understood and agreed that community groups working towards common interests and goals were useful.

“I would like the community to talk and participate in social activities”

Quote, Female, 30-40 years

Group discussions

The group had a preference for small informal gatherings of like minded and culturally linked individuals. The group like the approach used for the focus group with the opportunity to discuss common interests with someone to moderate.

Leaflets/posters

The group agreed that leaflets were their favoured marketing mechanism. To be successful the leaflets would need to be well designed and be targeted. Plus there would need to be some differentiation between them and ‘junk mail’.

All agreed that they paid attention to posters, especially when sat on the bus.

“I always take notice of any information displayed on a notice board at my local GP because it is the doctors! It has got to be beneficial to me and my family”

Quote, Female, 30-40 years

Local press

This group largely consumed news items online with little interest in available paid for and free papers. Some knowledge of the Visitor and Guardian newspapers was expressed but few read these every week. Once again this behaviour may not be representative of the Muslim community.

Community Kitty

Caution and unwillingness were expressed by some group members when considering this method.

Mystery customer

Most agreed that this concept was ‘good idea’ although to be successful it would be important to feedback.

Social networking sites

The group’s usage varied and no conclusion was drawn. Awareness of Facebook and Twitter were high although there were reservations about security.

Local public meetings

Some of the group had attended these in the past whereas others had no interest in them. Group members would only stay for a maximum of an hour. The group agreed that their attendance would be very dependent on the topic, its relevance to their lives and the wider community.

Online forums

There was little interest in this method due to time and uncertainty of effectiveness.

“Chatting on line is useless!”

Quote, Female, 30-40 years

Exhibitions

Dependent upon:

- Participant’s “freetime” available- most would attend if time allowed

- The level of relevance and the interest levels the roadshow generated
- Position – only attend if the roadshow was in a convenient position – in the vicinity

Newsletters/magazines

The Group all agreed that they currently receive these publications from LSP organisations and on the whole liked the concept of a concise summary of information. However, the Group did perceive them to be similar to other unwanted 'junk mail' and that there is a need to address the frequency and positioning of these.

Non effective methods

- Telephone Surveys – considered an inconvenience by most of the Group
- On Street Surveys – most commented that they do not stop as they tend to be in a rush in the town centre. One member would consider if she was free to spend more than 15 minutes to complete it
- Write in with Comments

Hindu community

A focus group with members of the Hindu community group suggested the below preferences for engaging their community.

The group were very keen to see an increased degree of 'contact' being made between the partners and community groups.

Ethnic minority communities (not only Hindu) must be represented on working groups. This would encourage empathy and knowledge of specific barriers to change such as language.

It is important that discussion groups/forums are friendly to encourage participation.

Consider the following when planning engagement with these communities:

- Timing – make sure you check when religious holidays are and give community plenty of notice
- Provide information on who to contact and provide an opportunity to ask questions
- Approachable project team leaders and members must be able to engage and respond to questions
- Use local or central venues
- Use a mix of methods to engage and promote engagement activity e.g. Exhibitions and adverts in local press – encourage participation across different user groups
- Engage existing networks and community leaders
- Ensure membership/engagement takes place with a representative sample of the Lancaster district (socio economic profile). May need to map and target specific community groups
- Transport may discourage engagement – irregular public transport across wards and parish councils will impact on decision to become engaged
- Feedback is important – good feedback will encourage future engagement whereas poor feedback will not.

Group rankings of the best ways to communicate

Good Method	Possible Method	Non Effective Method
Community Kitty	Internet/Email/Websites	Text/SMS
Telephone Research	Interview at Home	On Street Surveys
Voting in Referenda	Local Community Group	On Line Forums
Mystery Customer	Local Councillor	Social Networking Sites
Roadshows	Newsletter/Magazines	Board/Committee Meetings
Group Discussion		Local Public Meetings
Citizens Panel		Television/teletext
Postal Surveys		
Exhibitions/Open Days		
Write in with Comments		
Local Forum		
Leaflets		
Posters		
Local Press		

Community kitty

Discussions about time and increased responsibility and the need to build a working group were raised in relation to this method. There was an understanding that there would be high demands on this group but the method would be highly effective.

Telephone research

The group felt that calls were intrusive and generally agreed that they were unwanted and most members would not condone this method.

Dependent on:

- The subject for research was of importance to the daily life and well being of the participant i.e. public sector issues such as regeneration and major road works
- That the interview was pre-arranged with an appointment agree to the participants convenience

Voting in Referenda

The group agreed on the importance of the current democratic constitution and the need to use this method to communicate and change.

Mystery shopper

The group were unfamiliar with this method. The group agreed that this method would produce key information although there was concern about it being a 'big brother' approach.

Roadshows

The ability to locate roadshows within community areas was agreed to be a major strength.

Citizen panel

The group agreed on the benefits of random sampling and the long term benefits of regular engagement and research. The group even discussed the merits of this 'jury style' system over the elected representatives currently in place.

Postal surveys

The group had similar opinions on this method to telephone interviews in relation to the importance of the issue to the participant and time/convenience for the participant.

Dependent on:

- The subject for research was of importance to the daily life and well being of the participant i.e. public sector issues such as regeneration and major road works
- That the interview was pre-arranged with an appointment agree to the participants convenience

"If it was something to do with my area, something important then I would respond"

Quote, Female, 30-40 years

Write in with comments

The group would only use this method if the issue was important to the individual or community. The group recognised that this method would be good for those people who may feel uncomfortable expressing themselves in person.

Local forum

The group welcomed this method and agreed that a structured management approach was essential. An elected chairperson could manage meetings including agreements and actions. It was recognised that forums would undoubtedly encourage greater participation within community groups.

"It's a Friendly Forum!"

Quote, Female, 40-50 years

Leaflets

All group members had received information leaflets from many of the LDLSP partners. The tourist information centres and libraries were highlighted as good places to access information. Further education courses details were often obtained via leaflets. Good design and relevance were highlighted as important to encourage recall, interest and retention.

“If I needed that information I would go and look for that leaflet”

Quote, Female, 40-50 years

Posters

The group agreed that they pay attention to well designed posters in and around Lancaster and Morecambe.

Local press

The group read the local papers including the free papers and paid for press. Although not everyone received the Citizen and the Reporter, all read the Lancaster Guardian on occasion.

“Some local papers are better than others – The Lancaster Guardian is better than The Morecambe Visitor”

Quote, Female, 40-50 years

Internet/email/websites

The group members did not use the internet much but agreed that they would use it as a ‘look up’ guide for information and would also read newsletters sent via email. However the group would not spend time accessing certain portals for updates but rely on email prompts to point them to relevant sites.

Please note: no real conclusions can be drawn in relation to online methods due to the small group size and low internet usage although concerns around security are valid.

Interview at home

Acceptable on following conditions:

- Safety – identification and authentication would be required
 - Convenience – need to call or write prior in order to arrange an appointment time and date
- Location for face to face or in depth interviews was not considered too important and other locations would be acceptable e.g. a private room in council offices.

Local community groups

The group assumed that the definition of a local group was that it was established and not a single interest group e.g. parish councils. The group agreed that familiarity with group members would further encourage participation.

Local council

One member of the group had full knowledge about their local councillor and his/her responsibilities whereas others were not aware of their ward councillors. The following suggestions were made:

- Local councillors need to raise their profile and hence increase their presence and effectiveness within the Hindu community
- Need to adopt a more ‘approachable’ public face – allowing further involvement between elected members and local residents

Newsletters/magazines

The group agreed that they would flick through rather than read newsletters/magazines from cover to cover.

Non effective methods

- **Web based** e.g. online forums, social networking sites – not heavy internet users and takes time. Would need to be well moderated to avoid abuse.

“I would never take part – I would rather speak to someone”

Quote, Female, 40-50 years

- **Board/committee meetings** – format of meetings not well suited to participation especially by members of the Hindu community.

“I would feel quite daunted”

Quote, Female, 30 -40 years

- **Local public meetings** – questions are collated prior to the meeting removing the opportunity for spontaneous challenges during the session and tends to attract more vocal participants who may have bested interests.

“...but I may not speak because people stand up and they're very good at speaking a lot – well some of them are- and sometimes you feel a bit daunted by getting up”

Quote, Female, 30 -40 years

- **Television/teletext** – the group were not heavy television users although they suggested that the early evening news could be used for important announcements e.g. consultation programmes.

Gypsy, Roma and Travellers community

A focus group with the Lancashire Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community Group suggested the below preferences for engaging their community.

Key issues raised include:

- A willingness to attend further Open Forums and Discussion Groups managed in an informal setting
- The group revealed high levels of satisfaction with traditional above the line marketing communications channels including targeted leaflets, print media and TV
- A high level of awareness of the local elected representative and the means to communicate with them
- Enthusiasm to extend or develop further multi-cultural events, as experienced recently at Lancaster Town Hall. The emphasis to be placed upon hospitality, the family and open access for children and young people

Consider the following when planning engagement with this community:

- Carrying out engagement activities at convenient times – many have working families
- Carrying out engagement activities in convenient locations - “If you had to get a train somewhere and its expensive on the train the distance would be a problem” Quote, Male, 30-40 years
- Privacy issues – concerns about postal surveys, home interviews, telephone interviews and unwanted junk emails - *“You don’t want to give your information out and you don’t want to be on the phone ages and I don’t want to be on a mailing list”* Quote, Male, 30-40 years
- Using informal structures - key to both creativity and access
- Be aware that not all the community have internet access
- Not using self completion surveys – general unwillingness to complete
- Taking up people’s time
- Relevant to community lives
- Provide refreshments at engagement events – food was very important to this group
- Provide feedback – perceived lack of feedback from previous engagement - *“You never get to know anything after you’ve told them everything.....you would like to know the outcome of it”* Quote, Female, 30-40 years
- Using competitions
- All engagement activities need to be family friendly – include and welcome children to avoid need for childcare provision although no need to organise facilities for them - *“I’m lucky tonight as my husband is at home and has the kids. But if he is working I would have to bring them with me or not come”* Quote, Female, 30-40 years

Best ways to communicate (without provision of method suggestions)

- Leaflets and leafleting
- Advertising in the local press
- Local radio
- Organisations going into schools – *“My little girl is now obsessed with recycling ‘cos they took them on a school trip to the tip about recycling. And they came into the school and talked to them as well and explained what they recycled and what they made...so it does reach the kids when they talk to them”* Quote, Female, 30-40 years
- Face to face interviews in the workplace.

Group Rankings of the Best Ways to Communicate

Good Method	Possible Method	Not Effective Method
Local Forums	Exhibition / Open Days	Postal Surveys
Local Public Meeting	Write in with comments	Social Networking sites
Citizens Panel	Roadshows	On Line Forums
Group Discussions	Local Councillor	Internet/Email/Websites
Voting in Referenda	Community Kitty	Telephone Surveys
Television/Teletext		Board Meetings
Leaflets		On Street Surveys
Newsletters/Magazines		Interviews at home
Local Press		
Local Community Group or Parish Council		
Posters		

Top 5 ways to communicate (following provision of suggested methods)

Please note these are not in order although this community seemed to read the papers more than other groups and newsletters were their lowest preference.

- Television/ Teletext
- Leaflets
- Local Press
- Local Community Group or Parish Council
- Newsletters /magazines

Leaflets/newsletters/magazines

Good design is key.

This provides the potential to target and refine a message to suit community groups which is important.

"I think if its something you're interested in and you get a leaflet you'll have a look whereas I don't really read the paper"

Quote, Female, 30-40 years

Local press/newspapers

The majority of the group read local papers although the impact would depend on how much the issue stands out from everything else.

Television/teletext

Everyone in the group watched TV.

Local community group/parish councils

The group appreciated the opportunity to discuss their views and new ideas in an informal environment. An informal structure is key to both creativity and access. Lancaster City Council meetings were not considered to be effective.

Exhibitions/road shows

"They would be interested in a mobile exhibition set up in Lancaster. And if they have something for the kids"

Quote, Female, 30-40 years

Good design is the key and need to feel comfortable to going to a building to participate in something. The issue would need to be relevant to their lives, otherwise they would have no interest in attending.

Community Kitty

There was a concern about time and effort required although liked the idea of achieving some financial independence.

Writing with comments

This method is used by the group when they need to complain.

Of writing in "I probably wouldn't but my husband would"

Quote, Female, 30-40 years

Local Councillor

Awareness of relevant local councillors and aware of how to get in touch.

"I would go to them if you had a complaint and talk to them I know I would"

Quote, Female, 30-40 years

Non effective methods

- Telephone Surveys - problems relating to privacy issues and in relation to telephone numbers and onward data mining by third party companies
- Interviews at Home- concerns about time and privacy and lack of control
- Internet - ok with reading website copy (passive involvement) although unhappy with sharing an email address with the possibility of spam emails
- Committee meetings - lack of interest in the subject matter and the time taken to attend
- Postal Surveys - attendees do not want their details placed on a mailing list
- Social Networking Sites - fears that they will be "bombardeed" with unwanted messages and viruses
- Survey (in general) - time was the main factor plus apathy towards the subject matter.

Eastern Europeans – Polish community

A focus group with the Polish Community Group suggested the below preferences for engaging their community. A translation service was provided.

Key issues raised include:

- General feeling that the Polish community is not taken notice of or heard
- Need for a dedicated linguist/translator to provide translation, advice and support to Polish early settlers into Britain
- The lack of a Polish Liaison Officer in most organisations inhibits enthusiasm - this resource would provide both linguistic skills and an understanding of cultural differences
- Potential improvements include a permanent support manager and an established location which would need to be well promoted
- Previous poor experience with a specific organisation will mean that they are likely to become engaged again.

Consider the following when planning engagement with this community:

- Using bi-lingual literature and resource whenever directly consulting and communicating with this community including language support for services – particularly to communicate with early settlers who may have low levels of English language skills (NHS language line is too difficult to use)
- Holding ‘street’ events within local neighbourhoods for all community groups – the open nature appeals to the Polish community. Events would help their local neighbourhood familiarise themselves with the Polish community. *“The best way to communicate with people with a different language and a different culture is to organise a sort of Happening on the street”* Quote Female, 20-30 years
- Providing opportunities for this community to attend open forums and discussion groups to avoid mis-representation amongst their neighbouring communities
- Promoting and letting people know well in advance of any events, meetings, exhibitions etc. to attract community involvement
- Not using letters unless plan to translate - *“If you receive a letter and you don’t speak the language you just throw it in the bin or you just keep it in the pile and you keep worrying thinking Oh My God maybe they wanted something from me.”* Quote Female, 20-30 years
- Not insisting that calls are made from landlines only (DSS – Job seekers allowance do this) – most Polish people do not have a landline
- Using Polish support groups to consult and involve the Polish community (seen as the most appropriate channel) ie reference made to previous Helping Hand support
- Using ‘Signpost’ – Citizens Advice Bureau as a channel to consult and involve the Polish community
- Use existing community groups
- There may be different needs between older and younger members of the Polish community
- Holding engagement activities over the weekend - varied working weeks and hours created very few “windows of opportunity”
- Providing feedback – previous engagement events have lacked any meaningful and accessible feedback this can lead to disinterest
- Providing hard copies of feedback rather than putting it online.

Group rankings of the best ways to communicate

Works Well	Do Not Work
Newsletters/leaflets	Councillor as main point of contact
Posters	Local and National Press
Community Kitty	TV – only Polish TV
Postal Survey	Board Committee Meetings
Exhibition Open Day – must be in Polish with linguists support	Parish Council Meetings
Interview at Home – with Polish linguist	On Line Forums and Chat Rooms
Group Discussions	Voting / Referendums
Questionnaire – must be in Polish	Social Networking Sites – those in English
Social Networking Sites – those in Polish	
Internet – Email – Broadcast emails – must be in Polish	Street Surveys
Consumer Panels – through Helping Hand	Telephone Surveys

Face to face

Group discussions and interviews in the home were favoured although translation would need to be provided. It would be better if the person conducting the discussions and interviews was Polish as they would be familiar with cultural differences and perhaps have faced the same difficulties at some stage.

Newsletters/leaflets/postal questionnaires etc

Partners would need to provide translated versions of these. The use of visuals may assist understanding further.

Online methods

The Polish Community were not keen on online engagement opportunities.

Voting in elections and referenda

“I don't know what the political parties stand for and there is no information and even though we have the right to vote I don't vote”

Quote Female, 30-40 years

Community Kitty

“Those people who know what is needed for the community therefore those people will spend the money wisely and everybody will be happy”

Quote Female, 30-40 years

Citizen's Panels

“They would be interested to form a panel of Polish people to answer questions on a regular basis – it would be organised through Helping Hand”

Quote Female, 30-40 years

Gender equality

Our research has shown that male's communication/involvement method preference was via internet/email whereas females preferred the press/media.

- Consider the need for gender analysis in assessing and reporting outcomes of the community engagement processes Monitor gender balance in participation and responsibilities
- When conducting surveys and interviews try to ensure that 50% of the respondents are female and 50% are male. In any case the representation of either gender should not fall below 40%
- Consider using a female/ male co facilitating team in engagement activities.
- Consider alternating the chairing of the meetings between male and female
- Pay attention to the contributions in a meeting. If a meeting seems to be dominated by one gender, make efforts to invite people from the other gender to participate and express views
- Invite as many women and men, paying attention and targeting the gender group less likely to participate. Use inclusive language so each group feels invited
- Consider using people from both genders in a promotion of the event
- Some women feel more comfortable expressing their views in a separate process. They feel that they have more opportunities to share their views and opinions in women-only group activities. This would guarantee the inclusion of some of the women for whom culturally it is not appropriate to speak in front of men
- Consider concerns for safety and security associated with going out at night.

Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual & transgender people (LGB&T)

LGB&T communities are one of the many communities within the Lancaster district. However these communities are often victims of harassment, assault and discrimination through ignorance and fear by others.

Based on national research the estimated Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) population of Lancaster District is between 5-7% of the population, which roughly equates to between 7,000 and 9,600 people. The estimated Transgender/Transsexual population of the district, again based on national research, is around 1% or 1,380 people.

Consider the following when planning engagement with this community:

- Not everyone is heterosexual and don't assume that everyone in your focus group, consultation or presentation is
- Discuss consultation with participants before hand
- Ensure confidentiality from the beginning
- Consultation should take place in a LGB&T friendly environment
- Use LGB&T researchers if possible.
- Heterosexual researchers must be knowledgeable about LGB&T issues
- Consider the need for training on sexuality and gender issues if you are not in the LGB&T community
- Take a sensitive approach to working with this community group especially in relation to meeting in public spaces.

A focus group with members of Lancaster and Morecambe PRIDE Committee (known as "Out in the Bay") suggested the below preferences for engaging lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender community.

Key issues raised included:

- Promotion and communication needs to be targeted to meet the needs of this group
- Attendance to public events is not guaranteed and more targeted specialist methods need to be used
- The PRIDE network could act as a hub for future consultations (group expressed a hope that LDLSP would engage more fully with this community in future)
- Younger community members favoured new technology especially text messaging and social networking

Group rankings of the best ways to communicate

Good Methods	Possible Methods	Non Effective Methods
Leaflets	Internet/websites/email	Voting in Referenda
Social Networking Sites	Board / Committee Meetings	Online forums
Text/SMS (no charge)	Posters	Local Councillor
Group Discussions	Interview at Home	On Street Surveys
Roadshows	Postal Surveys	Telephone Surveys
Mystery Customer	Local Press	Local Forums
Community Kitty	Television/teletext	Local Community Meetings/ Parish Council meetings
	Write in with comments	Local Public Meetings
	Newsletters/magazines	
	Exhibitions	
	Citizens Panels	

Leaflets

Leaflets need to be well designed and highly relevant. It needs to be clear that it is not 'junk mail'; this could be done by using clear branding.

Partners could consider consulting this group on innovative designs and most effective formats.

Social networking sites/text/SMS messaging

Under 35 year olds favour and have a high awareness of sites including Beebo, Facebook and Twitter.

Group discussions

Partners should use a similar format to the focus group carried out to inform LDLSP Community Engagement Strategy and Toolkit.

Road shows

Partners need to target community areas allowing access by residents for the least cost and maximum convenience and establish a presence in outlying wards of the district where transportation problems exist.

Internet/website/email

A number of concerns were raised:

- Exclusion of low income groups
- Exclusion via technology affinity and understanding
- Exclusion via “interest”. Online solutions are very age specific with the cut-off point possibly around the 35 years of age range. Users younger than this would be fully able to engage with online solutions whilst the older age ranges *generally* preferring more established methods.

Board/Committees

Partners need to adapt how they conduct business in order to improve accessibility by community group members.

Posters

The following issues were important to success:

- Key message to be relevant and targeted to the LGBT community
- Design to be key – images to be favoured over extensive copy
- To be impactful creating immediate attention

Partners could consider consulting this group on innovative designs and most effective formats.

Interviews at home

Concerns were raised about safety, security and trust.

“Where it comes from for me and possibly quite a lot of LGBT people is to find a safe environment where you are actually safe to talk about what’s going on for you and quite often that can be at home....a lot of public places – it’s just a no, no”

Quote, Male, 30 – 40 years of age

Local Press

Local free papers were generally read by all.

Write in with comments

This method provides the group with the opportunity to express themselves without prejudice. Suggestion boxes also provide this opportunity.

Newsletters

Suits some and not others

“A lot of people that miss the information don’t read them. If you don’t read and that’s the only information that you getyou miss out on so much”

Quote, Female, 30 – 40 years of age

Exhibition/Open days

Need to consider the following issues:

- Location to be key to the audience to be engaged with
- Cost – related to the above with transportation costs affecting participation levels

Partners should consider using commercial venues and work places for an exhibition e.g. supermarkets. Lancaster town centre is a good location but not the Town Hall. Mobile road shows a better option as,

“...it has to be local to the area it’s in because a lot of people have not got cars to travel and some people do not pay to get on the buses”

Quote, Female, 30 – 40 years of age

Citizen’s panels

Attracts people who readily volunteer - *“the ones who always turn up”* and *“the more vocal and well educated”* members of the community.

Non Effective Methods

Voting in Referenda

Need to make sure engagement activities reach people who are not on the electoral roll and those residents who actively chose not to be contactable for personal reasons.

Online forums

Internet awareness was high particularly from the younger members although there is little enthusiasm to be involved in online forums.

On street surveys

“Normally you are trying to do something on the street – people trying to stop you – they are in your way”

Quote, Male, <20 years of age

Local public meetings

“People tend not to go and those with the severest problems tend not to go out anyway”

Quote, Male, 30-40 years of age

“...all about dog muck and speeding. Nothing to do with the people. I have been in so many meetings where by the time you get on the agenda you are sick of talking about dog poo, speeding cars and crime related to young people....”

Quote, Female, 30-40 years of age

LDLSP focus group with the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender community report, Andrew Woods – July 2009

For more information and advice please contact:

Out of the Bay

www.outinthebay.com
lgbtoutinthebay@googlemail.com

Local business community

Partners should consult the local business community on operational issues directly with the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce www.lancaster-chamber.org.uk/

Lancaster District Chamber of Commerce is the primary organisation that can represent the voice of the local business community, with over 500 member organisations covering all the key employment sectors district-wide.

Lancaster District Chamber of Commerce are represented on the following local groups:

- Chamber/City Council Cabinet /Business Liaison Group
- City Council Planning Policy Liaison Group
- Lancaster District Vision Board
- Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership and Economic Group
- North Lancashire LAG Lancashire Rural Development Fund
- Heysham Power Station Local Community Liaison Council
- Lancaster University Court

Lancaster City Council has a Business Cabinet Liaison Group which includes representatives from Lancaster and District Chamber Liaison Group, Morecambe Retail, Commercial and Tourism Cabinet Liaison Group, Bay Tourism Association, Lancaster District Federation of Small Businesses and Carnforth and District Chamber of Trade.

Our research has shown that businesses in the Lancaster district prefer information to be sent to their business/home (newsletters/magazine). Their second preference is to be involved with organisations through exhibition/open days/drop-in events and finally leaflets sent to their business.

Elected members

Ward councillors and members of Cabinet should be consulted. It is a good idea to let relevant ward councillors and members of Cabinet know of any consultations as they may be questioned by their ward. Plus they can promote and champion consultations to encourage people to have their say. Councillors act as a contact for their wards to provide feedback on services and may also be able to provide local intelligence.

Our research has shown that Lancaster districts Muslim, Chinese, Polish and LGBT communities think that local councilors are not an effective way of engaging with their communities. The research has shown that Lancaster districts Polish and LGBT communities think that the voting in referenda is not an effective way of engaging with their communities. Whereas, Muslim, Hindu and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities think it is an effective way to engage with their communities.

Our Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, Hindu and Polish communities think that boards/committees are not effective ways of engaging with their communities.


Lancaster City Council

Please visit www.lancaster.gov.uk/councillors/

Informing Lancaster City Council councillors can be done by an email, paper copy or putting something in the councillors' newsletter.

For more information and assistance please contact:

Members Services


 01524 582170


 memberservices@lancaster.gov.uk

Lancashire County Council

Please visit www3.lancashire.gov.uk/council/councillors/

For more information and assistance please contact:

 0845 053 0000

 enquiries@lancashire.gov.uk

Town and Parish Councils

It is important to consult parish councils as they have local knowledge and may be able suggest the best way to do things to benefit their community.

The best way to contact parish councils is through their clerks. Please visit www.lancaster.gov.uk/ and search for 'parish council'


It is important to be aware that it may be a while before the next parish council meeting where they can consider your issue.


Our Polish and LGBT communities think that local community groups/parish councils are not effective ways of engaging their communities. Whereas, Muslim and Gypsy, Roma and

Traveller communities think that local community meetings/parish councils are an effective way of engaging with them.

For more information and assistance on parish councils please contact:

Member Services

 01524 582170

 memberservices@lancaster.gov.uk

Engagement methods

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Social Marketing

What is social marketing?

Social marketing is a way of changing people's behaviour in a positive way by using customer insight/intelligence to target our marketing and communication.

Social marketing is *'the systematic application of marketing, alongside other concepts and techniques, to achieve specific behavioural goals, for a social good'*.

National Social Marketing Centre web site.

How can it help us?

Carrying out research to find out what issues our communities have and what barriers there are for using services will help us to move from selling what we want to what our audience want.

We need to ensure we provide convenient and accessible services – if people perceive something to be difficult human nature means they won't do it.

Commercial vs. Public sector

The commercial sector taps into people's emotions by researching and gaining insight and an understanding of their emotional triggers. Whereas, the public sector offer advice and provide information to try to persuade people to do things, this is traditionally done in a fact giving way. If people are not already interested in this it won't get them interested as we do not sell the benefits.

Who uses it?

Social marketing is well used and supported by the NHS.

'It would be easy to give the public information and hope they change behaviour but we know that doesn't work very satisfactory.'

'Otherwise none of us would be obese, none of use would smoke and none of us would drive like lunatics.'

Ian Potter, Director - New Zealand Sponsorship Council, New Zealand Herald June 2007

How can it be used?

Social marketing can be used to inform and assist policy formulation, strategy development and related implementation and delivery, including service development and design. When considering how social marketing might be able to assist work, it is useful to distinguish between using it strategically and using it operationally.

Key features of social marketing

- 1. Customer orientation** – move away from creating our own messages to using customer intelligence from our audiences to create messages that will be well received
- 2. Clear focus on behaviour** – how do people currently behave and how would we like them to behave
- 3. Informed by behavioural theory**
- 4. Insight** – research with our communities will help us to find out what motivates our communities – their wants, needs, feelings, values, fears and aspirations.
- 5. Exchange** – what are the benefits and costs for our targeted audience – use this information to reduce any barriers. Costs/barriers prevent people to make behavioural change.

E.g. costs of going for a mammogram – fear of finding cancer, going to the hospital, waiting for the results and finding a parking place.
Benefits – offer counselling, GP surgeries, reduce wait time and provide adequate parking.
- 6. Competition** – understanding factors that impact on people and that compete for their attention and time (habit, addiction, lifestyle etc.)
- 7. Segmentation** – divide and target specific audience groups that behave in same way or have similar needs (see below segmentations)

Demographic

Age
Gender
Life stages/marital status
Sexuality
Income
Occupation
Education
Religion
Race
Generation
Nationality

Geographic

World, region or country
County region
Postcode
City/inhabits size
Density – urban rural
Home type
Home ownership
Climate

Behavioural

Occasions (regular, social)
Benefits (quality, service, convenience)
User status (non user, ex user, potential)
Usage rate

Loyalty status
Readiness stage
Attitude towards product

Psychological

Social class
Motivations
Aspirations
Lifestyle
Values
Beliefs
Attitudes
Personality

Importance of segmenting

Message (traditional blanket approach) – don't sniff glue or aerosols, they can kill you

- How terrifying, I won't be doing that!
- So what?
- It's a kids drug, I wouldn't be seen dead doing that
- Hmm, I didn't know you could sniff glue – I will give that a try!

Segmentation would mean that the audience would be split up into groups and targeted with the appropriate message for them.

- **Methods mix** – engagement and communication methods

Marketing mix – the 4 'Ps'

Product/service – what does the customer get? What is being offered?

Price – how much will it cost? (not just financially, could also be time, effort additional costs)

Place – how are we going to get this to the customer? Where is available?

Promotion – what methods shall we use to communicate? How can we reach the customer?

For more information visit National Social Marketing Centre web site: www.nsmcentre.org.uk

Information from courses ran by 'Brilliant Futures' has been used to inform this section.

Newsletters/magazines

Use to... keep people informed of progress on projects or as one method of carrying out a survey

PROS

- ✓ Straightforward means of keeping people informed and encouraging further contact
- ✓ A relatively cheap means of reaching large numbers of people
- ✓ Enables you to control the flow of information
- ✓ An excellent complement to other forms of engagement
- ✓ Research shows information sent direct to the home is one of the top ways people find out about an issue

CONS

- ✗ Not an interactive process
- ✗ Impersonal and will be discarded immediately by lots of people
- ✗ Can lure you into thinking that what is written is read, what is read is understood and what is understood is accepted
- ✗ Will not reach everyone, even when delivered door to door
- ✗ It is not a substitute for other forms of engagement

Newsletters are one of the cheapest and most effective methods of keeping people informed of progress on projects. However, using a newsletter in isolation should not be regarded as engagement.

Information should be kept short and to the point. Regularity and quality are more important than quantity. The style should be lively, as colourful as you can afford, and include contact names and details, signposting people to where they can find out more.

Our research has shown that nearly three quarters of people interviewed across the district preferred information to be sent to their home (newsletter/magazine). The research has also shown that Lancaster districts businesses, people with disabilities and older people think that information sent to their homes is an effective way of engaging with their communities. Our Chinese, Polish and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community think that newsletters are an effective way of engaging their communities, although both Chinese and Polish said they would have to be targeted and provided in their languages.

Partners have suggested that this is one of the most effective engagement methods.

Points to think about:

- Purpose: consider the purpose of the newsletter and who it is aimed at.
- Budget: think carefully about the methods and costs of production and distribution.
- Schedule: draw up a realistic schedule for production and distribution, and a list of topics the first few issues should cover
- Execute your distribution effectively

Costs: low (depending on volume)

Leaflets

Use to... keep people informed of forthcoming and current projects – shortened version of a newsletter

PROS

- ✓ Straightforward means of keeping people informed and encouraging further contact
- ✓ A relatively cheap means of reaching large numbers of people
- ✓ Enables you to control the flow of information
- ✓ An excellent complement to other forms of engagement
- ✓ (If sent direct to home) research shows information sent direct to the home is one of the top ways people find out about an issue

CONS

- ✗ Not an interactive process
- ✗ Impersonal and will be discarded immediately by lots of people
- ✗ Can lure you into thinking that what is written is read, what is read is understood and what is understood is accepted
- ✗ Will not reach everyone, even when delivered door to door
- ✗ It is not a substitute for other forms of engagement

Leaflets can be very cheap to produce and can be an effective way to inform people. However, as with newsletters, they should not be used in isolation nor regarded as engagement.

They should be kept short and to the point. The style should be lively, as colourful as you can afford, and include contact names and details. Signpost people to where they can find out more.

Our research has shown that Lancaster districts our business, Chinese, Hindu, Muslim, LGBT, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities think that leaflets is an effective way of engaging with their communities.

Points to think about:

- Purpose: consider the purpose of the leaflet and who it is aimed at
- Budget: think carefully about the methods and costs of production and distribution
- Schedule: draw up a realistic schedule for production and distribution, and a list of topics the first few issues should cover
- Execute your distribution effectively
- Costs: low (depending on volume)

Posters

Use to... draw people's attention to an issue or event

PROS

- ✓ Straightforward means of attracting attention and encouraging further contact
- ✓ A relatively cheap means of reaching large numbers of people
- ✓ An excellent complement to other forms of engagement

CONS

- ✗ Not an interactive process
- ✗ Should be visual and little room for words and explanation
- ✗ Will not reach everyone
- ✗ It is not a substitute for other forms of engagement

Posters can be very cheap to produce and can be an effective way to attract attention. They should not be used in isolation nor regarded as engagement.

They should be highly visual with good strong images, preferably of 'real' people or eye-catching artwork. Words should be kept to a bare minimum and be large and easily read from a distance. Include contact names and details. Signpost people to where they can find out more.

Our research has shown that Lancaster districts Chinese (community centre), Polish, Hindu, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities think that posters are an effective way of engaging with their communities

Points to think about:

- Purpose: consider the purpose of the poster and who it is aimed at
- Budget: think carefully about the methods and costs of production and distribution
- Schedule: draw up a realistic schedule for production and distribution, and a list of topics the first few issues should cover
- Execute your distribution effectively
- Costs: low (depending on volume)

Sign up emails

Use to... draw people's attention to an issue or event and generally keep people informed

PROS

- ✓ cost-effective – the overall cost is far less than for a postal address
- ✓ easy to respond to – because of its interactivity and ease of response, recipients are often more likely to take action
- ✓ interactive – you can include links to your website or others
- ✓ fast to implement – you do not have to wait for your document to return from the printers
- ✓ easy to time – to ensure your message is timed to hit on a specific date
- ✓ easy to customise – if you are sending a document to a group, where each person can choose whether they want to receive your publication
- ✓ trackable – easy to tell whether someone has received an email and opened it and archive the audit trail
- ✓ easy to detect mail that has not been delivered – if someone closes their email account, you will receive an automatic 'return' response
- ✓ An excellent complement to other forms of engagement

CONS

- ✗ Will not reach everyone – only those who sign up
- ✗ Too many emails may create email 'fatigue'
- ✗ More resource intensive in terms of monitoring and replying to response

A cheap effective way to communicate. Email content should be kept to a minimum and clearly set out, making it visually easy on the eye. Use other communication methods to signpost people to the sign up facility and use the facility to signpost them to where they can find out more.

Points to think about:

- Purpose: consider the purpose and who it is aimed at
- Budget: think carefully about the methods and costs
- Schedule: draw up a realistic schedule for communication, and a list of topics the first few issues should cover
- Before sending an email consider whether the people you are addressing it to really need to see it. If you are sending them a regular publication such as a newsletter, give them the option of opting out of receiving it
- Check your spelling and grammar and seek expert advice if required
- Use a meaningful heading in the subject box
- Be mindful of what you write as the communication will be permanent
- Set up your personal stationery so your emails automatically sign off with your details ie your name, address, contact numbers, fax or website
- Ensure you provide timely responses to your users or that response standards are clearly set out
- Costs: relatively low

Notice boards

Use to... draw people's attention to an issue or event

PROS

- ✓ Straightforward means of attracting attention and encouraging further contact
- ✓ A relatively cheap means of reaching large numbers of people
- ✓ Most organisations have notice boards that can be used by others
- ✓ An excellent complement to other forms of engagement

CONS

- ✗ Not an interactive process
- ✗ Info on board must be highly visual to 'compete' with other information on the board. Little room for words and explanation
- ✗ Will not reach everyone
- ✗ It is not a substitute for other forms of engagement
- ✗ Resource of distributing info to boards
- ✗ Resource ensuring out of date information is removed

Notice boards can be a very cheap and effective way to attract attention. They should not be used in isolation nor regarded as engagement.

They are ideally suited to give people small amounts of information eg the date, time and venue of an event, the subject of a consultation and how they can get involved. Information place on boards should then signpost people to where they can find out more.

Points to think about:

- Purpose: consider the purpose and who the information is aimed at
- Budget: think carefully about the methods and costs of production and distribution
- Establish a database of notice boards and contacts who will place the information on the board. Contacts you can email the information too will be more cost effective
- Schedule: draw up a realistic schedule for production and distribution and execute your distribution effectively
- Remove out of date information
- Costs: low (depending on volume)

Texting

Use to... alert people to an issue or event

PROS

- ✓ A quick and straightforward means of attracting attention and encouraging further contact
- ✓ A relatively cheap means of reaching large numbers of people
- ✓ An excellent complement to other forms of engagement
- ✓ Majority of people have a mobile phone
- ✓ Low cost
- ✓ One way of involving/engaging children and young people

CONS

- ✗ Can only get across the headline, not the detail
- ✗ Building up the database of contacts can be time consuming
- ✗ Will not reach everyone
- ✗ It is not a substitute for other forms of engagement
- ✗ Need to ensure contact info is kept up-to-date
- ✗ Need knowledge of how to set up
- ✗ Need to manage responses and feedback
- ✗ Can only use a short message
- ✗ Need access to people's phone numbers
- ✗ Can be seen as invasive

Texting can be a relatively cheap and effective way to attract attention to an issue, rather than to provide the full detail eg inviting them to participate in a consultation and signposting them to how or where they can find out more. Recent research shows this is the younger generation's preferred method of contact, however it is likely to be less effective with the older generation.

Our research has shown that Lancaster districts Muslim, Hindu and Chinese communities think that text/SMS is not an effective way of engaging with their communities. Whereas, our LGBT community think that this is an effective way of engaging with their community.

Points to think about:

- Purpose: consider the purpose and who the information is aimed at.
- Budget
- Establish a database of contacts and ensure it is kept up to date
- Keep info short and clear

Costs: relatively low (depending on volume)

Social networking

Use to... draw people's attention to an issue or event and encourage discussion/interaction and participation

PROS

- ✓ Useful means of attracting attention and encouraging further contact
- ✓ An interactive process
- ✓ A cheap means of reaching large numbers of people
- ✓ Opportunities to increase ability to engage young people who otherwise might show little interest in local issues
- ✓ An excellent complement to other forms of engagement.

CONS

- ✗ Info will not reach everyone
- ✗ It is likely to generate negative responses as well as positive and everyone can see what is being said
- ✗ Once you publish something in this way it is available forever
- ✗ Information must be monitored, responded to where appropriate and kept up-to-date
- ✗ It is not a substitute for other forms of engagement

Digital technology has changed the way we view the world forever. In the simplest terms, it has made the world smaller and made it quicker and easier to 'talk' to anyone, anytime, anywhere.

There are a number of social networking sites which are increasingly being used to create groups/followers, share information and encourage interactivity and engagement.

- Twitter
- Facebook
- YouTube
- My Space
- Bebo

It's important you select the right site for your purpose and seek advice from someone who fully understands its potential and limitations.

Our research has shown that Lancaster districts Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Hindu and Polish communities think that the social networking is not an effective way of engaging with their communities.

Whereas, our Polish and LGBT communities think that social marketing is an effective ways of engaging with their communities, although our Polish community said this would need to be in Polish.

Points to think about:

- Purpose: consider the purpose and who the information is aimed at.
- Information remember once posted your information is then in the public domain for ever
- Style: who is your audience, write in the style most likely to appeal to them
- Keep information up-to-date
- Monitor responses regularly
- Costs: low

Blogs

Use to... provide commentary or news on a particular subject

PROS

- ✓ Straightforward means of keeping people up to date
- ✓ A cheap means of providing information to potentially large numbers of people
- ✓ Interactive
- ✓ An excellent complement to other forms of engagement.

CONS

- ✗ Info will not reach everyone
- ✗ It is likely to generate negative responses as well as positive and everyone can see what is being said
- ✗ Once you publish something in this way it is available forever
- ✗ Information must be monitored and responded to where appropriate
- ✗ Blogs must be added to on a regular basis, otherwise they run the risk of losing the interest of the reader who will move elsewhere
- ✗ It is not a substitute for other forms of engagement

Blogs (short for weblogs) are online diaries, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order.

Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries.

A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, Web pages, and other media related to its topic.

The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. Most blogs are primarily textual, although some focus on photographs (photoblog), videos (vlog), and audio (podcasting).

Points to think about:

- Purpose: consider the purpose and who the information is aimed at
- Information remember once posted your information is then in the public domain for ever
- Style: who is your audience, write in the style most likely to appeal to them
- Keep information up-to-date
- Monitor responses regularly
- Costs: low

Websites

Use to... keep people informed of progress on projects or as one method of carrying out a **consultation**

PROS

- ✓ Straightforward means of keeping people informed and encouraging further contact
- ✓ Can be an interactive process
- ✓ A relatively cheap means of reaching large numbers of people
- ✓ Enables you to control the flow of information
- ✓ An excellent complement to other forms of engagement
- ✓ Increasing numbers of people are choosing to obtain their information online
- ✓ Enables people to find out about the subject, or participate, in their own time, wherever they may be
- ✓ If used as a survey method, allows people to take part quickly and cheaply
- ✓ Unlike other methods, the cost effectiveness of this product means there is literally no end to the amount of information you can publish and in ways where the reader can pick and choose how much detail they wish to access
- ✓ Can be used for detailed consultations or to obtain quick snapshot views/responses

CONS

- ✗ Impersonal
- ✗ Will not reach everyone
- ✗ Onus is on people to come to your site rather than taking the information to them
- ✗ It is not a substitute for other forms of engagement

Websites are one of the cheapest and most effective methods of keeping people informed of progress on projects. However, using a website in this way should not be regarded as engagement.

Even more so than with a newsletter, information should be kept short and to the point — regularity and quality are more important than quantity. The style should be lively, include pictures if appropriate, and include contact names and details, signposting people to where they can find out more.

Our research has shown that Lancaster districts Chinese and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities think that the internet/email is not an effective way of engaging with their communities. Whereas, Muslim and Polish communities think that it is an effective way to engage with their communities, although the Polish community said it would have to be in Polish.

Our research has also showed that Lancaster districts Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Polish, Hindu, Chinese and LGBT communities think that online forums are not an effective way of engaging with their communities.

Points to think about:

- Purpose: consider the purpose of information provided and who it is aimed at
- Budget: think carefully about whether you create a new site or piggyback on an existing one
- Establish links to and from the site
- Use other methods to create awareness about it

Costs: relatively low (depending on whether set up costs are required and whether you can do your own editing or need to buy in support)

Press and media

Use to... keep people informed of progress on projects or as one method of carrying out a survey

PROS

- ✓ Straightforward means of keeping people informed and encouraging further contact
- ✓ Can be an interactive process
- ✓ A cheap means of reaching large numbers of people (free other than time)
- ✓ Can significantly raise the profile of an issue/event
- ✓ An excellent complement to other forms of engagement.
- ✓ Enables people to find out about the subject, or participate, in their own time,
- ✓ If used as a survey method, allows people to take part quickly and relatively cheaply (depending on method of submitting responses)
- ✓ Can be used for detailed consultations or to obtain quick snapshot views/responses

CONS

- ✗ Impersonal
- ✗ Will not reach everyone. Newspaper sales are decreasing
- ✗ Onus is on people to buy the paper to get the information rather than taking the information to them
- ✗ An indirect communication method that is mediated by the media organisation. You cannot control what is printed
- ✗ It is not a substitute for other forms of engagement.

Information should be kept short and to the point — regularity and quality are more important than quantity. The style should be lively, include pictures if appropriate, and include contact names and details, signposting people to where they can find out more. One of the best ways of getting a journalist to write about an issue, and in particular, if you want them to write a feature rather than just cover a short news story, is through personal contact.

If you develop a successful working relationship with the journalists covering your constituency, over time, they are more likely to be receptive to your ideas for stories and to approach you for comments when local issues arise. Ideally requires person with relevant skills, knowledge and experience to deal with the media.

Our research has shown that people across the district prefer local press and media as one of the ways of engaging with them. The research also showed that Lancaster districts Chinese and Polish communities think that the local press is not an effective way of engaging with their communities. The research also showed that Lancaster districts Muslim and Hindu communities think that television is not an effective way of engaging with their communities. Whereas, our Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community think that television was an effective way of engaging with their community.

Our research has shown that Lancaster districts older people, females, Muslim and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities think that the local press/media is an effective way of engaging with their communities.

Partners have suggested that this is one of the most effective engagement methods.

Points to think about:

- Purpose: consider the purpose of information provided and who it is aimed at.
- Costs: relatively low (depending on whether set up costs are required and whether you can do your own editing or need to buy in support)
- Cost: Low

Citizens' panel

Use to... get views of a representative sample of the population on specific proposals, develop views of future need or measure satisfaction

PROS

- ✓ Can track changes in views over time
- ✓ Can collect views of particular groups in the population or particular service users.
- ✓ Because members are recruited on a voluntary basis, they are more likely to be committed to responding to questionnaires and so increase the response rate
- ✓ Special needs of certain panel members will be known about in advance so they can be prepared for
- ✓ Reasonable response rate – people have agreed to sit on panel
- ✓ Can be operated as an e-panel
- ✓ The Panel can provide very quick results – quick access to group of residents willing to give time and views

CONS

- ✗ Needs considerable staff support to establish and maintain
- ✗ Socially excluded groups including residents with English as a second language tend to be excluded
- ✗ The subject needs to be seen as relevant to the members and there can be criticism if important decisions are not considered by the panel.
- ✗ Postal panel – little control over who responds (panel may be representative but response may not)
- ✗ Over time, the process of taking part in a panel is likely to make members increasingly experienced and knowledgeable. This will make the Panel less representative of the population as a whole, therefore regular replacement of the membership is essential
- ✗ Often reflects organisations agenda rather than communities
- ✗ Younger members tend to drop out, so the average age of the panel gradually increases

A citizen panel is a large, demographically representative group of local residents regularly used to assess public opinions and preferences.

Our research has shown that Lancaster districts Muslim and Chinese communities think that a citizen's panel is not an effective way of engaging with their communities. Whereas, our Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and Hindu communities think that a citizen's panel is an effective way of engaging with their communities.

Points to think about:

- Survey topics: the types of survey the Panel is useful for requires careful thought. You are more likely to get useful results when you ask questions about something the members know and care about. Think about targeting particular surveys on sub-groups of the panel for example, older people. Questions that seek information about specific experiences of panel members (eg have you used this service? What was it like to use?) are more likely to provide solid responses. If running a joint panel it is important to agree a rolling programme to avoid consultation fatigue.
- Role: Panel members need to be made clear about their role on the panel. They will need to know how frequently they will be consulted and how long they will be on the panel (normally 2 to 3 years)
- Publicity: All panel members should be sent a newsletter giving details of how the results of the surveys have been used, under the heading of “You said...We Did”
- Costs: Relatively expensive to set up and maintain, requiring significant resources in terms of staff time, skills and money. Cost is dependent upon size of panel, methods used, frequency, incentives and how often membership renewed. Staff time can be taken up with maintain database, recruiting, running and analysing results. E-panels can provide a lower cost option.

Sharing costs with other partners could be cost-effective, and, in the long run, it should work out cheaper regular one-off surveys.

A representative panel for the Lancaster district would need to have at least 1,000 members.

When to use it:

- To gauge and track opinion on local issues and priorities
- When want quick and easy accessible resource for more in depth research e.g. focus groups
- Test public for new policy areas and service changes
- Develop a picture of public opinion overtime

When not to use it:

- Not as only method as panels are rarely representative

Use to... get views of representatives of the population, and track views over time. A panel involves regular maintenance, but provides a useful resource for an established consultation sample.

Lancashire Citizens' Panel

Lancashire County Council run a citizens' panel called 'Living in Lancashire' (LiL).

LiL is a panel of over 3,000 Lancashire residents from all walks of life right across the county. LiL members give the county council a broad range of views and opinions about local services and life in Lancashire. Every few months the county council send members a survey giving them the opportunity to tell the council their views on things that really matter to them.

With these surveys they also give feedback on how the council is going to improve our services to better meet the needs of the people in Lancashire.

To find out more visit www3.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/atoz/a_to_z/service.asp?u_id=1624

Or contact

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Consultation documents/inviting written comments

Use to... circulate written proposals to get views on detailed and potentially complex information from interested parties.

PROS

- ✓ Can provide users with detailed, comprehensive information on complex subjects
- ✓ Gives you considered views of respondents based on accurate information
- ✓ Can be accompanied by questions
- ✓ Web-based processes allow comments on documents and responses to questions to be displayed in full

CONS

- ✗ You may get a low response as written documents will put some people off commenting
- ✗ You will exclude people who can't read or write English (consider translating documents and providing them in other formats)
- ✗ Costs of printing and distributing documents can be significant
- ✗ Timescales will be longer than for some methods of consultation
- ✗ Analysing responses can be resource-intensive

Exercises involving consultation documents are designed to provide a formal means by which people can be invited to comment on policies and proposals. The key is to get the best spread of views from those likely to be affected, and from those with most to contribute. All engagement-related documents should be concise, clearly laid out and written in simple language that will be understood by the intended audience. Avoid jargon. Documents should ideally contain the following:

Summary

- Description of issue, proposal or problem being addressed.
- Areas where views are sought – where possible use questions or options
- Any decisions that have already been made
- Sources of information and factual information
- Explain who will be affected
- Deadline for responses
- Outline of decision making timetable
- Contact details
- List of who is being consulted – may want to ask if anyone not included
- As respondents to explain who they are and who they represent if anyone
- Responses will be made available unless confidential.

Our research has shown that Lancaster districts Muslim and Hindu communities think that asking for written comments is not an effective way of engaging with their communities. Whereas, Chinese community think that this is an effective way of engaging communities.

Points to think about:

- **Publicity:** publicise the existence of the document (for example, through an appropriately targeted press release), and wherever possible use the Internet to publish it and receive replies.
- **Format:** be ready to deal sympathetically with requests for documents in other formats/languages. If necessary, consider other ways of consulting ethnic minority groups or people with special needs, for example, through face-to-face discussions.
- **Timing:** allow people consulted enough time to reply, making allowances for holiday periods and other potential timing difficulties. Decide in advance how to deal with requests for the deadline for comments to be extended, and how to acknowledge responses.

After the engagement period:

- **Reporting:** the results of all engagement exercises should be carefully analysed. Once a decision has been taken on the way forward, let respondents know promptly how the work will proceed, and explain how the decision reflects the results of the consultation.
- **Summary:** produce and make available a summary of views and information collected from the engagement exercise.
- **Feedback:** where respondents ask why their views have been rejected, try to give them a prompt and full explanation.
- **Costs:** Relatively cheap method, but depends how many people you consult and how you print and distribute documents. Printing and distribution of documents and supporting information will also incur costs.

Use to... gather opinion on detailed information.

Face to face/in depth interviews

Use to... explore issues where you need to know views, attitudes, behaviour or motives without aiming for statistical validity.

PROS

- ✓ Can help in obtaining wide-ranging responses to proposals for new services
- ✓ Good for gaining views of certain sorts of individuals excluded from mainstream consultations (such as people from disadvantaged groups)
- ✓ Flexible enough to allow new issues to be raised that your organisation may not have thought of
- ✓ Can provide more detailed feedback than a group discussion
- ✓ Useful for obtaining views of people who might not feel comfortable speaking in a group
- ✓ Longer and more flexible questionnaires
- ✓ May help explore sensitive, personal or painful issues
- ✓ Can identify new issues that may not of been thought of
- ✓ High response rate
- ✓ If good sample is used, can produce very accurate results

CONS

- ✗ Interviewers need to be sensitive and skilled
- ✗ Because of small numbers, you cannot rely on results being typical of the overall group you are concerned with
- ✗ Costs are high per individual and can be time consuming
- ✗ Does not provide statistical information – it will give you the ‘why’, not the ‘how many’
- ✗ Expensive
- ✗ Full time workers are less likely to be in during the day, meaningful interviews must be made in the evening or at weekends, further increasing the costs
- ✗ Needs careful preparation to avoid leading or biased questions
- ✗ Need to protect confidentiality
- ✗ Collation and presentation of results can be time-consuming

Interviews can tell you what people think and why, and allow you to explore in detail their views, attitudes, behaviour or motives. They might help you determine what it is you want to cover in quantitative research or provide views on a service you are proposing. What they cannot give you is accurate statistics about users’ opinions.

In-depth one-to-one interviews can help you to explore particularly sensitive topics. They allow a rapport to be built up, enabling the interviewer to probe into feelings and thoughts that someone may not readily reveal in a group discussion or on paper. But they are time-consuming and difficult to analyse.

Our research has shown that Lancaster districts Muslim, Hindu, Chinese, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, Polish and LGBT communities think that on street surveys are not an effective way of engaging with their communities.

Our research has also showed that Lancaster districts Chinese and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities think that interviews at home are not an effective way of engaging with their communities. Whereas, our Polish community thinks this is an effective way of engaging with their community, although only if Polish linguist was provided.

Points to think about:

- Expertise: get expert advice from someone who has carried out interviews in your own or another organisation, a local university or a research consultancy. You need someone with experience in research to run-in-depth individual interviews and analyse the results.
- Content: consider carefully what you want the interview to cover, and draw up a strategy for your interviewer/s. One of the advantages of interviews is that they allow the flexibility for new and interesting issues or ideas to be probed in depth, but you need to ensure that the specific areas you want information on are covered, and defining these clearly in advance is important.
- Location: decide where you are going to carry out the interview. This could be in the interviewee's home, in the street or at the point of service delivery. You will get differing response rates depending on where you choose. If you decide to interview in the street, you will be restricted on how much time the person has for the interview and you will not be able to go into any great depth. People may not be keen to let you into their homes, but you are likely to get much better quality information through home interviews.
- Representativeness: don't expect the feedback from individual interviews to be typical of the views of all users.
- Costs: high per individual, but you get a lot of information in return.

When to use it

- To get a feel for issues
- To gain 'expert views'
- Before a survey to identify issues to quantify
- After a survey to investigate results in greater depth

Use to... explore issues where a large amount of open-ended information is needed.

Useful for obtaining views of people who might not feel comfortable speaking in a group.

Focus groups

Use to... explore views and opinions within a group who can bounce ideas off one another

.PROS

- ✓ Lets you find out what is important to users
- ✓ Users may feel more confident in groups and say things they wouldn't say on their own
- ✓ Groups allow people to spark ideas off one another
- ✓ Provides information about what people think and why
- ✓ Specific groups can be targeted
- ✓ Can help you to get through to non-users
- ✓ Can include people who do not read or write or who do not speak English (if you use an appropriately skilled facilitator)
- ✓ Members can be recruited to fit specific profiles

CONS

- ✗ Must use experienced facilitator (can be expensive)
- ✗ Often unrepresentative
- ✗ Difficult to prioritise issues (although there are techniques for doing this)
- ✗ Dominant participants might shout other more inhibited members of the group down
- ✗ Does not provide statistical information, instead giving you the 'why', not the 'how many'
- ✗ Feedback will not be typical of the views of all users
- ✗ Lack of confidentiality in groups may inhibit some participants
- ✗ Can be difficult to get the right people to participate
- ✗ Analysis is time consuming and complex

Focus groups are normally made up of around 8-10 people, last between 1 and 2 hours and are led by a trained facilitator in a discussion on a particular topic. Like individual interviews, focus groups allow you to explore issues in considerable depth, and have the advantage that people can bounce ideas off others. You should always carry out more than one focus group.

Focus groups are particularly useful if you want to find out what specific groups of people (such as non-users or minority ethnic groups) think about your service.

Our research has shown that Lancaster districts Chinese, Hindu, Muslim, Polish, LGBT, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities think that small informal discussion groups are an effective way of engaging with their communities.

Partners have suggested that this is one of the most effective engagement methods. Points to think about:

- **Compositions:** although it is tempting to try to get a group to be fully representative of your users, experience shows that the more similar the group is in terms of gender, age and social class, the easier it is for them to communicate effectively. You may need more than

one discussion group if you want to investigate the views of more than one part of the community. The timing of your focus groups will need to fit in with the needs of the members.

- **Expertise:** it is important to use a skilled facilitator to run groups. They will help make sure that everyone has a chance to speak, and move the discussion along without imposing their own views.
- **Focus:** start with something relatively simple with real boundaries. For instance, ask a group of users to talk about your waiting facilities, or your information leaflets.
- **Valuing participants:** show participants that you value their contribution by making sure that they have clear information about what their role is, and that all practical arrangements run smoothly. It is often the little things that are important (and sometimes forgotten) like giving people a map to help them find the venue, letting them know how long the discussion is likely to take, what's going to happen afterward, whether refreshments are to be provided, etc.
- **Incentives:** it is often a good idea to follow up your invitation with telephone call the day before the focus group, and it is generally appropriate to offer to pay travel expenses. You could also consider a prize draw or free access to your facilities as incentives.
- **Preparation:** it is important to prepare for the focus group carefully. Draw up a list of questions for discussion or areas that you want to be covered. Although the groups should be fairly flexible and informal, a structure that makes sure that the significant areas are covered, and that other issues do not take over the discussion, is important. If there is more than one focus group, this will also provide for some consistency, allowing results to be compared between groups.
- **Recording:** you might want to consider video or audio tape recording sessions to allow more detailed analysis afterward. Such intention needs to be made clear to participants before they consent to take part. However, normal notes are also important because, for example, the use of visual aids would be difficult to record on tape and non-verbal communication would be lost to audio taping.

Costs: Medium to low, unless you need to recruit participants through a truly random selection; which can be costly. The use of external facilitators can also incur high costs. Other costs include venue, refreshments, incentives, childcare provision etc.

When to use it

- When you need to understand reasons for attitude, behaviour and generate new ideas
- Before a survey to identify issues to quantify
- After a survey to investigate results in greater depth
- Test opinions of interest groups

When not to use it:

- If you are looking for a fully representative group

Use to... get qualitative views from all audiences. This is particularly useful for assessing potential and non-users.

Careful preparation is needed for arrangements for the session and well-planned topic guide.

Feedback from staff/suggestions schemes

Use to... get views of people working within an organisation.

PROS

- ✓ Gives positive and negative feedback on service
- ✓ Shows you value front-line staff
- ✓ Shows how you are open to suggestions and comments
- ✓ Source of instant information about what happens when people use your service

CONS

- ✗ No good unless staff are properly trained, and systems for collections and discussing feedback are in place
- ✗ Can be time-consuming to analyse comments
- ✗ Won't provide statistics (other than numbers of comments)
- ✗ Not necessarily representative. Relies on staff making effort. No substitute for actively seeking their views

Staff who are in everyday contact with users will have a perception of what annoys and frustrates them, what they like and what they want changed. It's worth collecting, analysing and acting on this information. Front-line staff can be the first to spot problems; tapping into this information can help you solve problems at an early stage. It can also make staff feel valued and gives them an important role in improving services.

You don't necessarily need a complicated system. For many services, a simple form, and discussions at regular team meetings, will be enough. Or you could set up a group to collect and consider suggestions. Promote staff suggestion schemes actively rather than simply expecting passive feedback. Build in ways of passing on this feedback to decision-makers.

Points to think about:

- **Who to consult:** which of your staff have most contact with your users? Contact may be face-to-face, by telephone or in writing. Try to get comments from staff who deal with the public in as many different ways as possible. Your staff will have views about the ways your users like to comment, and these may help you target future engagement exercises.
- **Training:** staff need to be trained to deal with comments and, particularly, complaints. Depending on your circumstances, think about training in areas like telephone skills, problem solving and dealing with difficult or angry customers. Make sure that your staff are briefed well enough to provide information to members of the public. They should have an overview of the organisation and know where to get further information.
- **Systems:** you should have regular systems for getting feedback from staff. These should be both formal (e.g. regular team meetings, inviting front-line staff to planning meetings) and informal (e.g. informal chats between senior and junior staff, written/e-mail systems, suggestion boxes). There should be ways for staff to make anonymous comments/suggestions if they wish.
- **Valuing Staff:** make sure your staff know that you value their comments and views. Consider rewards (they do not necessarily need to be financial) for good suggestions. If you have a reward system for good suggestions/comments, make sure that the process of

selecting the winners is fair, and is seen to be fair. And always publicise what you have done as a result.

- Reporting: staff must feel that they will not be penalised for making comments that might be critical of your service. Make sure that reactions to ideas are not defensive or negative, but do respond to suggestions. If there are good reasons why suggestions can't be implemented, it's important to explain what these are. Having an open and positive attitude will encourage staff to contribute more ideas.

Costs: relatively cheap, as you are using existing resources.

Use to... capture good ideas from staff.

If there are good reasons why suggestions cannot be implemented, it's important to explain what these are.

Web based/online

Use to... provide alternative ways for people to become involved, usually in combination with employing other engagement techniques.

The development of new information and communication technologies is making it possible to consult and involve users in new ways. Making participation easier for people is one of the key ways to increase levels of involvement. For many, the opportunities offered by new technology make it both easier, and more fun, to take part. Bear in mind though, that this is not yet universally the case. Access to new technology is limited, and there will always be some people who will not want to use these methods. You will exclude significant groups if you rely too much on these media.

Web-based processes

Because there are a range of web-based processes available, it is important to be clear about what you want to achieve, in order to choose the best method. For convenience, the methods available have been divided into three types, but remember that there are variations on these, and it's important to talk through the options with someone who thoroughly understands the alternative.

Type 1 – Threaded Forums and Bulletin Boards

PROS

- ✓ Cheap and easy to set up
- ✓ Not overly structured for constraining or participants
- ✓ Quick and easy way of gathering public feedback
- ✓ Participants can access anytime
- ✓ Anonymous – can help people feel more comfortable about giving their views

CONS

- ✗ Some are not very easy to navigate and need expert input on their design
- ✗ Limited discussion – many people post their comments and don't engage with what others have said
- ✗ Limited to those with internet access
- ✗ Moderation can be time-consuming and requires expertise
- ✗ If participation rates are low, interest can reduce very quickly
- ✗ It can be difficult to create logical reports from unstructured forum responses

Forums are discussions held online. Email Bulletins only provide one way communication. Online forums; are sometimes referred to as message boards, web forums or chat rooms provide a space for online debate and discussion.

Topics are introduced on the forum and the public can comment on or respond to other people's responses. Participation can be by invitation only or open to all.

The best forums tend to be those set up and run by people with common interests. On the whole they are not very satisfactory as a top down engagement method.

Cost: These methods use free software and are therefore cheap and easy to set up. The main cost is staff time to maintain the systems.

When to use it:

- You want to explore people's perceptions of specific options
- You want to have an open discussion about an issue
- Your intended participants are willing to engage online

When not to use it:

- Some of your intended participants are unable or unwilling to use the internet
- You do not have the time or resources to moderate the forum
- You are looking for in-depth discussion

Type 2 – Online questionnaires

PROS

- ✓ A straightforward method of collecting quantitative information
- ✓ Can be focused on specific issues
- ✓ Large numbers of people can be contacted at low cost
- ✓ Easy to survey people over a wide area – both rural and urban
- ✓ Systems can do analysis for you
- ✓ Response rates are quicker and cut out postal and inputting costs
- ✓ Good for establishing information that can be re-tested to see if results change over time

CONS

- ✗ Not so good for collecting qualitative information
- ✗ Not everyone has access to the internet
- ✗ Little control over who completes in the questionnaire
- ✗ Risk that people could respond more than once
- ✗ One-time questionnaires may produce misleading results
- ✗ It requires expertise to write a good questionnaire, and a poor format can produce confusing results

A well-designed questionnaire or survey can be very easy to fill in and can make analysis of results very cost effective.

Too much information can be a real deterrent, but an online questionnaire allows for layers of information. For example, a couple of sentences can be provided to introduce a question, with a hyperlink to more detailed information.

The big advantage of online questionnaires is that you can gather lots of data and analyse it quickly, but actually getting people to the website can take as much if not more effort than using a paper questionnaire.

Cost – relatively cheap

Use to... explore general issues with users. Can be targeted to particular groups and focused on specifications.

Useful for reaching a large sample, however careful thought needs to be put into design of the study and mechanisms to improve response rates.

Type 3 – Online consultation documents

PROS

- ✓ An extremely cost-effective way of hearing people's views on issues
- ✓ Allows people to say what they want on a particular subject at any time of the day or night
- ✓ Can be used on a website that will provide other information
- ✓ Can potentially involve large numbers of people

CONS

- ✗ Excludes people who don't have access to the internet (possibly low income groups)
- ✗ Not a substitute for actually meeting and talking to people
- ✗ Participation can be confined to the very dedicated and may therefore be unrepresentative

Online consultation can be open to the general public or by invitation only to a representative group or specific set of people.

Care must be taken to design and manage the process and collate and analyse the results. And don't forget to provide a technical helpline.

Type 4 – e-petitions

PROS

- ✓ Monitoring has shown that they are used by men and women, young and old, and from all parts of the country
- ✓ - They allow people to find others who are campaigning about issues that are important to them
- ✓ - Provides increased awareness of what issues are important to local people
- ✓ - Encourages participation and engagement from people who previously may never have been involved in anything, or signed anything before
- ✓ - More easily circulated and sign than paper version

CONS

- ✗ - Not representative of the local population - the 'silent majority' are not given a voice
- ✗ - Opposing views may be overshadowed by the dominating petition
- ✗ - Media coverage may bias responses (number of signatures)

E-petitioning is the modern day way of the right to voice an opinion through petitioning government. Once up people should be able to show support by adding their name, email and postal address.

A petition should include:

- A well thought out request - what is it that the petitioners want the accountable body to do or stop doing
- Name of owner and lists supporters

Once closed a report should be produced setting out the number of signatures, their reliability and summarising discussions for and against.

When to use it:

- You want to get a large number of signature support of your petition
- You want to be able to encourage more engagement than by paper based equivalent
- You want to provide people with easy access to greater information and background to the petition. Information can be displayed on the website, a forum can be set up to allow discussions and an administrator can respond to queries
- You want to provide feedback to people by email
- You want people to openly comment on a proposal

When you not to use it:

- You want an in depth discussion of an issue
- You want to develop people's thinking on a topic

Cost: Low - once a system is set up it can host many e-petitions although processing the information and responding to requests can be time consuming.

Costs: Relatively low.

Use to... provide an alternative tool for engagement, used in conjunction with other methods to reach a wider audience.

The format in which information is made available will influence the ability of different groups to participate in consultation.

Mystery shopping

Use to... test specific areas of service delivery.

PROS

- ✓ Precise and detailed feedback
- ✓ Relatively simple to implement
- ✓ Flexible and immediate. You should be able to highlight particular service areas and investigate possible problems quickly
- ✓ Can highlight good and bad service
- ✓ Good way to involve/engage (if you recruit and train members of the community)
- ✓ Can identify practical solutions to problems
- ✓ Can be used to commend/motivate staff

CONS

- ✗ More applicable to front-line, person-to-person services
- ✗ Staff are often suspicious of schemes
- ✗ Requires well trained observers and evaluators
- ✗ Only gives isolated instances and small samples – snap shot
- ✗ Regular shoppers could be too experienced/stale – need to refresh

Mystery shopping can provide you with very specific and detailed feedback on areas of your service. Someone commissioned by you (you could recruit some of your own users to do this) tests the service, looking at a number of predetermined areas, and then reports back. This should give you a picture of the type of experience a real user would have. The process is relatively simple, although you will get much more out of it if it is well structured.

The Market Research Society best practice guide suggests that employees should know in advance but not exactly when it will happen. You should always provide shoppers with false names and addresses and a number they can contact in case they need to prove that they are legitimate mystery shoppers.

Our research has shown that Lancaster districts LGBT and Hindu communities think that mystery shopping is an effective way of engaging with their communities.

Points to think about:

- Suitability: this approach is more suited to some services, and aspects of services, than others. Front-line operations, where it is important to check that customers are being treated quickly and courteously and being given the right information, are suitable.
- The shopper: the mystery shopper should preferably be typical of your real users. They should not be given too much background knowledge (which may restrict their ability to see the service as real users to), but they should be given guidance on how to access the service and how to feed back the information.
- Running the scheme: you might want to contract out your mystery shopping to an external research firm. If you decide to run the scheme in-house, you will need to consider how to ensure a regular turnover of your shoppers so that don't become too knowledgeable. You

also need information from your mystery shoppers in a consistent format, so you will need to think about questionnaire design, briefing for your shoppers, and the practicalities of how they will feed back their information to you.

- **Systems:** as well as quality of service issues and the responses of staff, this approach can also identify problems with systems. For example; are signs and directions clear, is the correct information on display in offices, and are the relevant leaflets available?
- **Individual incidents:** what are you going to do with the information? You will get snapshot details of individual incidents, and will need to make sure that 'one offs' are not given too much weight. If it looks like there might be problem in a particular area, send another mystery shopper in to test the same service – 'one offs' and more fundamental problems can then be handled differently.
- **Presentations:** you need to think carefully about how you present the idea to staff – it can be seen as an underhand way of checking up on them, and a distraction from serving 'real' customers.
- **Incentives:** think about incentives, both for mystery shoppers and for staff. Encourage shoppers to highlight good as well as bad service, and then reward the staff who have performed particularly well.

Costs: relatively cheap, depending on how you do it. Recruitment and training can be labour intensive and will need to provide any expenses. Costs can be expensive when ran by an external company.

When to use it

- More applicable to front line, face to face services
- When you want to know how a service operates or how customers/clients are being dealt with

When not to use it:

- You don't have resources to reward or recognise participants
- You don't have time to adequately support and train shoppers
- Role has potential to be dangerous or unethical
- You are looking to involve service users over a longer term

Use to... check that services are working as they should.

The mystery shopper should ideally be typically of your user.

Open days / road shows / exhibitions

Use to... combine information giving within the local community with the opportunity to hear.

PROS

- ✓ Gives the public flexibility of when to attend
- ✓ Arouses interest by giving the public something to see or do
- ✓ Provides ad-hoc feedback on services and ideas for change
- ✓ Can be a source of suggestions and comments
- ✓ Gives users a chance to become familiar with your premises and meet staff, so promoting good relations
- ✓ Opportunity for people to ask questions
- ✓ Can be moved around e.g. rural locations
- ✓ Gives you an easy way to publicise your services and provide information to users
- ✓ Can help you contact potential and non-users
- ✓ Gives you quick feedback

CONS

- ✗ People who attend may not be particularly representative of users and non-users
- ✗ Won't provide statistical information (other than on numbers who attend etc)
- ✗ Feedback may be limited to responses to information presented/on display
- ✗ Time consuming to create materials
- ✗ Whole day sessions could be disruptive and take a lot of time for front line staff
- ✗ Difficult to strike the right balance between public relations, information-giving and engagement

Open days and exhibitions can be relatively informal occasions where users (and potential users) can find out what you do, meet staff, ask questions and so on. Or they can be more structures, with formal presentations and discussions. Roadshows are similar, except that you go to communities rather than expecting them to come to you.

Such events are not suitable for all services and probably the most useful if you want to get across the message that you are approachable and want users to be involved in what you're doing. They can also be a way of talking to people who don't currently use your services but might in the future.

Messages can be put across in many different ways. You could use simple information stands or displays, or try something more technical like a video or slide show.

Our research also showed that Lancaster districts our business, Polish, Hindu and LGBT communities think that open days/exhibitions/road shows are effective ways of engaging with their communities. Although our Polish community said there would need to be Polish linguists available.

Partners have suggested that these are some of the most effective engagement methods.

Points to think about:

- **Venue:** if it's an open day you will probably want to hold it at your own location so that users can see your services for themselves. If your own venue is unsuitable or you are taking a roadshow around your area, make sure that the location you use is suitable for the purpose, and there is good access for your users and potential users.
- **Timing:** this is important. Is a weekday, evening or weekend going to be most convenient for those you want to reach? Do you need to consider school holidays? Can you offer more than one option?
- **Publicity:** you will need to publicise the event well to get good attendance. Use a variety of methods to let people know what is happening (e.g. notices in local newspapers, posters, leaflets, invitations, informing local groups, etc). If you want to attract particular groups of people, think about ways of targeting them specifically.
- **Material:** the information you have on display or present is important. The people who come may have varying degrees of knowledge about your service, so you need to ensure that the information you provide appeals to a general audience. Make it as visual and interesting as you can, try to stimulate questions and make sure that you have staff around who can answer queries. A charter or similar document containing key information about your services, standards, contact points, etc. can be a useful document for your users and potential users to take away with them. But be careful not to rely too much on giving information to people to take away and read. People may be very willing to take material, but will they really read a mountain of paper when they get home?
- **Practicalities:** plan the practical aspects of the event carefully. You will probably need to make arrangements for setting up stands/equipment etc. and think about things such as refreshments, places for people to sit and rest, and so on. Try to get some indication of likely attendance if possible.
- **Feedback:** try to get as much feedback as possible from those who attend. As well as the specific comments of those who do come, it can be very useful to collect demographic information to show you who hasn't come. Comments can be collected in a variety of ways, from staff recording relevant points, to the public posting comment cards into a box.
- **Representativeness:** as with other techniques like this, where those commenting are largely self-selecting, don't use an open day or roadshow as your only means of consulting. The views you get are unlikely to be representative.

Costs: vary according to what you do. An open day could be cheap, but a roadshow or exhibition could be very expensive. Main cost is staff time – create display materials and manning activity.

Use to... inform audiences who are relatively unfamiliar with your service.

A charter or similar document containing key information about your services, standards, contact points, etc. can be a useful document for your users and potential users to take away with them.

Make sure that what is on display accurately reflects the services you can provide so that users do not get the wrong impression of what they can expect.

Open / public meetings

Use to... provide information and get a feel for public opinion on an issue where a representative sample is not vital.

PROS

- ✓ Provides local opportunities for people to comment on matters that affect them directly or indirectly
- ✓ Offers a convenient and transparent way to demonstrate public consultation / build up good relationships
- ✓ Can be used to inform the public at the same time as getting views

CONS

- ✗ People who attend are unlikely to be representative of the local population
- ✗ Attendees' ability to contribute to a discussion about service-wide, strategic priorities can be limited by a lack of knowledge and possible lack of interest
- ✗ Large public meetings don't often reflect the needs of community
- ✗ Can be very complex and unpredictable
- ✗ Can be intimidating and be hijacked by interest groups or vocal individuals
- ✗ Contributions will mainly be about local, topical or personal concerns

Open meetings are meetings arranged for members of the public to find out about and express their views on a particular issue. Attendance is open to any interested member of the public. Meetings are usually held in a public place (school, church hall, local sports centre, etc.) that is convenient for people to get to. The issue to be discussed is usually publicised in advance through posters, leaflets, letters, invitations, etc.

Public meetings often have very low attendance, and those people who do attend often have a particular concern or view, which is not necessarily representative of the population as a whole.

Open meetings can, however, be a good way of encouraging dialogue between a service and its users, and keeping members of the public informed. Used carefully, they can complement other forms of consultation.

Our research has shown that Lancaster districts LGBT and Hindu communities think that public meetings are not an effective way of engaging with their communities.

Whereas, older people and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities think that public meetings are an effective way of engaging with their communities.

Partners suggested that this is one of the most effective engagement methods.

Points to think about:

- **Issue:** the issue being discussed will clearly have an impact on attendance. More people will come if they are directly affected by or concerned about the issue, or interested in it. Try to make the material advertising the meeting as interesting as possible, but make sure that people who do attend have not been misled about the content. And have clear objectives for what you want to achieve from the meeting and how you are going to take forward what comes out of it.
- **Target audience:** open meetings are unlikely to attract an audience that is representative of the local population, and may contain more retired and middle-aged people than young people; so don't use them as your only method of consultation. Think about your target audience, and organise the meeting at an appropriate time and location.
- **Collecting information:** think about why people might want to attend an open meeting. As well as an interest in a particular issue, people might be motivated to attend by a sense of community spirit or support for the service. It is worth handing out a short questionnaire to people who attend as information about those who attend may help to identify things about those who don't. As a general rule, try to collect more comprehensive information than just about numbers of attendees.
- **Publicity:** publicise the meeting as widely as possible to reach your intended audience. As well as posters, leaflets, etc, word of mouth is an effective means of advertising. Speak to informal networks e.g. parish councils, community and interest groups.
- **Practicalities:** planning on the practical side of a meeting can be difficult if you have no idea how many people are going to attend, so you might want to ask people to let you know if they are going to come, so that you have some indication of numbers. If you've only planned for 30 people and 100 turn up, you may have problems.
- **Meeting structure:** think about how the meeting will be structured. Make sure that any speakers know what is expected of them (e.g. how long they should speak), and that the Chair is well-briefed and is able to control more vocal members of the audience and limit repetitive discussion. If appropriate, you might want to think about breaking the meeting up into smaller workshop/discussion groups to give more people the chance to participate.
- **Reporting:** recording views and reporting back can be difficult in open meetings, particularly if there are large numbers of attendees. Make sure that someone takes a note of the points raised (you may wish to tape-record the proceedings). You can ask people to vote on the main issues. But be careful about placing too much weight on these results. Views recorded in this way should generally only be used to give an indication of public views. You must make clear to participants how their opinions will be taken forward.

Costs: relatively cheap, depending on how you do it.

When to use it

It's most useful purpose may be simply to provide information rather than any more meaningful consultation per se

Use to... get a feel for public opinion on a particular topic/issue and inform the public.

Public meetings can be a good way to encourage dialogue and keep members of the public informed.

Questionnaires

Use to... generate quantitative data from often large representative samples, giving statistically reliable information.

PROS

- ✓ A very good method of obtaining reliable quantitative information
- ✓ Requires a relatively low level of interaction
- ✓ Allows you to analyse large samples quickly and even to track changes over time, if you use the same questions in later surveys
- ✓ Can be low-cost if routing and supported by in-house expertise
- ✓ Postal questionnaires - respondents can take the time they need to respond
- ✓ Postal questionnaires do not give any opportunity for discussion
- ✓ Good method of getting the views of non-users
- ✓ Good method for getting views from rural and urban areas
- ✓ Conducting the survey over the phone gives you the chance to explain questions if necessary.

CONS

- ✗ No control over who responds (may not be representative)
- ✗ Some questions can be difficult to ask e.g. awareness of you are asking about
- ✗ Telephone questionnaires exclude people without a phone
- ✗ Low response rates (telephone questionnaires have a higher rate than postal)
- ✗ Limited length and complexity of questions

Quantitative research gives you statistics in response to set questions. For instance, it could tell you what proportion of your users would like you to extend your opening hours to 6pm, or the aspects of your service that users would most like to see improved. It allows you to get views from a widely representative group of users (and non-users), and can give you statistically reliable information (i.e. you can reasonably certain that the answers given by your sample represent those of the entire group). It also allows you to compare information year on year if you ask the same questions. Quantitative surveys can be face-to-face, postal or conducted over the telephone.

Quantitative research will tell you what proportion of people hold a particular view about something but, unless you plan carefully, it won't tell you why. It can also fail to pick up on what might be significant problems for users, but which you hadn't considered when drafting your questions.

Our research has shown that people across the district prefer telephone and postal surveys as ways of engaging with them. The research also showed that Lancaster districts Muslim, Chinese, Polish and LGBT communities think that telephone surveys is not an effective way of engaging with their communities. Whereas, older people, people with disabilities and our Hindu community think that telephone surveys are an effective way of engaging with their communities.

Our research also showed that Lancaster districts Muslim and Gypsy, Roman and Traveller communities think that postal surveys are not an effective way of engaging with their communities. Whereas, people with disabilities and our Polish and Hindu communities think that postal surveys are an effective way of engaging with their communities, although these would need to be provided in Polish.

Points to think about:

- Type of survey: decide on which type of survey or questionnaire you want to use:
 - Deliberate: gives people information before asking their opinion
 - Qualitative: asks people to respond in their own words
 - Quantitative: asks people to react to various propositions by ticking boxes or marking answers against a scale
 - Online: can be any of the above, done by completing an electronic form
- Preparation: read other surveys, including the results and questionnaires any evaluation of the process. Talk to colleagues who have used surveys.
- Questions: the usefulness of a survey will depend on the questions. It is only too easy to carry out surveys which ignore the issues that are important to your users. Discussion groups can help you find out what you should be asking, or talk to local organisations who represent your users.
- Testing: pilot your questionnaire on a small group. Can they understand the questions? Do you get meaningful results? Will the results help you? Avoid leading questions, and only ask one question at a time (if you asked a question like 'do you like our charter or should it contain more information?' what would a 'yes' answer mean?).
- Relevance: don't ask a question if you can't act on the results.
- Satisfaction surveys: be wary of simple satisfaction surveys. They are relatively unsophisticated and can provide misleading information. For instance, with health services, people are generally so pleased to be better that they will say they are highly satisfied, having forgotten what happened along the way.
- Design: pay attention to the design and layout of survey forms. A large print size, plenty of space for people to write, clear instructions and questions, putting everything in a logical order and asking for personal information at the end rather than the beginning will all increase the chances that people will fill in the form. People may be put off by a very long questionnaire.
- Expertise: if you need to ask complex questions, you might need to employ someone to conduct interviews rather than rely on a self-completion questionnaire.
- Removing barriers: think about how to remove barriers for users: translate questionnaires, or consider an interpreter; use an interviewer for people who might have difficulty reading or writing; use Braille, large print or audio cassettes to survey visually impaired people; put

your questionnaire on the internet and invite email responses (email addresses appear automatically on mail, so bear in mind that people won't be able to send anonymous responses in this way); include a reply-paid envelope for postal surveys. It is sometimes useful to provide a point of contact for people who may have queries about the questionnaire.

- Confidentiality: allow people to make their comments anonymously. Make clear that opinions will not be published in such a way that individuals can be identified, unless you want to quote responses, in which case you need to ask for people's permission.
- Responses: sample sizes and response rates will vary according to the sort of survey method you are using, who you are asking and what you are asking. Response rates to postal surveys can be as low as 5 – 10% if they are sent 'cold'. You can improve this by designing the questionnaire carefully, including pre-paid reply envelopes, personalising letters, offering prize draws etc, but don't expect a 100% response! (see page 76 – Maximising Response Rates) A 60% response would be regarded as very good. It's worth getting professional advice about sample sizes. The larger your sample the more the exercise is going to cost, and there's a stage at which accuracy levels will not be significantly improved by increasing the sample size.

Sampling

The Audit Commission has published the following useful tables regarding the number of responses you need to provide a proper sample of opinions, and provide you with certain levels of accuracy.

TABLE 1	Estimated "Population"	Required Sample Size	Notes:
Required sample size for 95% confidence that the estimated error will be no more than $\pm 3\%$	500	341	Use the required sample from the population which is next after your own
	600	385	
	700	423	
	800	458	
	900	489	
	1,000	517	
	2,000	697	
	3,000	788	
	4,000	843	
	5,000	888	
	7,500	935	
	10,000	965	
	25,000	1,024	
	50,000	1,045	
1,000,000	1,066		

Source: Audit Commission: Sampling Guidance for Audit Commission Performance Indicators

TABLE 2	Estimated "Population"	Required Sample Size	Notes:
Required sample size for 90% confidence that the estimated error will be no more than $\pm 3\%$	500	301	Use the required sample from the population which is next after your own
	600	334	
	700	363	
	800	388	
	900	410	
	1,000	430	
	2,000	547	
	3,000	602	
	4,000	633	
	5,000	654	
	7,500	684	
	10,000	700	
	25,000	730	
	50,000	741	
1,000,000	752		

Source: Audit Commission: Sampling Guidance for Audit Commission Performance Indicators

Costs: relatively cheap, depending on how you do it.

Postal – hidden costs such as printing, enveloping, postage, data inputting etc.

Telephone – moderately expensive if carried 'out of house'. Hidden 'in house' costs include staff time, telephone call costs, data processing and analysis.

Video (participatory)

PROS

- ✓ Puts control into participants hands
- ✓ Empowers members
- ✓ Improves technological skills

CONS

- × Equipment can be expensive

Participatory Video (PV) is a set of techniques to involve a group or community in shaping and creating their own films.

PV is a group activity that uses video to aid learning and engagement. It allows participants to use video equipment to be creative and tell their own stories about different issues. The process of film making is equally as important as the film itself. Both can be used as a means to greater participation.

These can be lengthy due to the time it takes for participants to make and edit the video with as well as scheduled workshops for group discussions.

Cost: medium/high. Depending on whether you have equipment and organising workshops for participants to meet and review what has been done.

When to use:

- Community development
- Promoting local innovation
- A voice for marginalised groups
- Community led action
- To communicate with policy makers

When not to use:

- To resolve complex issues
- For larger, non communities or groups

Discussion packs

Use to... provide detailed background information for systematic exploration of issues.

PROS

- ✓ A good way to get the results of many deliberative discussions without having to organise them
- ✓ Enables 'ordinary' people to have discussions about complex issues
- ✓ Producing materials for different audiences forces the issues to be communicated clearly
- ✓ Good for discussing issues involving values rather than objective facts

CONS

- ✗ Considerable effort involved in producing materials and marketing the process
- ✗ Difficult to monitor the level of genuine understanding of participants
- ✗ Not likely to be representative, because people have to be strongly motivated to take part in this sort of exercise
- ✗ Relying on participants to record fully and objectively what was agreed can be a problem

There is an increasing demand for engagement methods which allow for detailed discussion of issues before giving their opinion. Discussion packs can be used as an alternative or in addition to deliberative processes such as workshops. They usually contain a series of information cards, scenarios or diagrams together with instructions for a self-managed discussion, not guided by a professional facilitator.

Packs also contain forms on which the participants can record the results of the discussion, the answer to the specific questions asked and some information about the size and membership of the group. Discussion packs can encourage widespread deliberation, raise awareness of issues and provide both quantitative and qualitative feedback on public opinion.

Points to think about:

- Identify the groups: carefully choose the groups to hold such discussions and draw up a plan for reaching and enthusing them.
- Contents of the pack: draw up an outline of the pack, including issues, information, instructions for reporting the results and advice on holding group discussions.
- Issues and Results: devise a sequence of questions that will enable participants to address the issues systematically, and tailor a reporting system to capture the results.

Costs: fairly high.

Use to... explore detailed issues in a structured and systematic way.

A chance to catch large numbers of people who would otherwise not have the opportunity to get involved.

User comments and complaints

Use to... get detailed information from those service users who wish to comment, identifying trends and problems and so on.

PROS

- ✓ Gives free feedback on services
- ✓ Easy to set up
- ✓ Helps you identify recurring problems
- ✓ Can save time and money
- ✓ Shows users you are open to comments and complaints and serious about putting things right
- ✓ Gives you information about your service's weaknesses and strengths
- ✓ Provides both quantitative and qualitative information

CONS

- ✗ Complaints may increase if you make your complaints handling system good, and if you publicise it well
- ✗ Not representative. Some users are reluctant to complain (or compliment), so don't assume that all the problems/successes will be highlighted
- ✗ Essentially reactive to existing systems – gives less insight into potential changes
- ✗ Can be difficult to present complaints information in a positive way

Encouraging users to give you feedback (compliments and general comments as well as complaints) will help them feel that your service is committed to listening to them. Monitoring this information can help you spot problem areas and give you general feedback. You will need good procedures to help you deal with individual problems and to give you information about trends, problem areas and so on.

Points to think about:

- **Procedures:** have a clear policy and procedure for dealing with comments, complaints and suggestions. Involve staff and users (including elected representatives, school governors, etc.) in producing and monitoring its effects.
- **Information:** give users straightforward information about how they can comment or complain – who to, what will happen next, why you want them to tell you what they think. Remember to include information about any appropriate independent review mechanism (for example, the Local Government Ombudsman, whose role, where appropriate, is to secure satisfactory redress for complaints in cases where a complaint cannot be resolved locally).
- **Presentation:** present the information clearly – use plain language, and consider font size and layout. Include information on bills, leave a card with customers where you visit, have a 'suggestions' line, and think about using the internet to 'try to be creative'.
- **Choice:** not everyone wants to make complaints or comments in writing. Make sure users can talk to someone wither face-to-face or by phone. Make sure also that staff treat verbal complaints in the same way as the written ones.

- People with special needs: think about the needs of people
- With impaired sight or hearing or learning disabilities
- Whose first language is not English or who cannot read at all
- Who might have problems with physical access (for example, people in wheelchairs, people with pushchairs).
- Publicity: publicity is important. Send out information when you contact your users, put posters where they are likely to be seen, circulate information to advice agencies, voluntary groups and other interested people. And feed back to users so they know they have been heard.
- Staff: make sure that staff understand and know your comments and complaints procedures and how they should respond – recognise that you may get more complaints as a result of your procedures being easier to use.
- Encouragement: encourage a 'no-blame' culture, and approach criticism and comments in a constructive and positive way.
- Reporting: publish information about complaints. This lets users know:
 - How you are performing against standards
 - That you take complaints seriously and that it is worth making a complaint
 - What improvements you have made as a result of complaints.
 - Costs: cheap, as you are using existing resources.

Use to... get detailed information from individual users.

Recognise that you get more complaints as a result of your procedures being easier to use.

User panels

Use to... get regular feedback from service users over a period of time, testing reactions to changes and getting ideas for improvement.

PROS

- ✓ Useful sounding board on which to test plans and ideas
- ✓ Can give you relatively quick feedback
- ✓ Adds credibility to your engagement process
- ✓ Creates a continuing dialogue with users
- ✓ Regular dialogue
- ✓ Builds positive relationships
- ✓ Helps you concentrate on issues from the users' perspective
- ✓ Panels can help service providers with resource allocations

CONS

- ✗ Managers may think that once they have a user panel, that's all they need to do
- ✗ Users can get too close to the organisation over time – become too knowledgeable and may start to identify with organisation or service
- ✗ Small number of people may dominate the group
- ✗ People have to give up free time to sit on panel
- ✗ Provides little in the way of statistical information
- ✗ Won't be effective without good input commitment from management
- ✗ Can be unrepresentative, especially of disadvantaged minority groups
- ✗ Time consuming/long term commitment
- ✗ Personal views can make the process heavily anecdotal and prevent the objective consideration of the issues

A user panel allows a small group of users and senior managers to discuss user concerns. Whereas a focus group may meet infrequently, a user panel will meet regularly over a longer period. It can give you early warning of problems and help you come up with ideas for changing or developing what you do. You could also use the panel to test changes you're considering.

Points to think about:

- **Composition:** consult staff, users and representative groups at an early stage about the proposed brief, membership, balance, roles of members and so on. Include a cross-section of users on your panel. You won't be able to get a fully representative group, but try to have a range of people.
- **Size:** have a relatively small panel (no more than 12 in total, including managers).

- Purpose: have clear objectives for the group; for example, 'to make the service more friendly and easy to use'.
- Skills: draw up a clear 'job description' and list the main qualities and experience required before starting to select members.
- Length of appointment: appoint members for a fixed term. After a while, they will get to know your business so well that there is a risk they may start to feel part of your organisation, and so lose credibility with other users.
- Facilities: provide support for members. Give them access to information, somewhere to meet, expenses for attending meetings, photocopying and secretarial facilities. Make the panel an integral and serious part of a member of your staff's work.
- Representativeness: don't use the panel as your only means of consultation. The group will not necessarily be representative of the views of all users, and its lack of financial and operational independence could create cynicism.
- Timing: allow time for representatives to refer back to user groups or to consult others. This can help increase their accountability and credibility.
- Commitment: treat the panel seriously. Be prepared to listen, learn and act.

When to use it

- To get regular feedback
- To engage users in service development
- To find out what people want/need; test options for change and views on conflicting priorities; and support bids for resources

When not to use it:

- When do not support work and unwilling to provide feedback or use panels as only way of getting feedback.

Costs – time to recruit members, administration, running meetings, venue hire, refreshments, advertising, travel expenses etc.

Use to... establish continual dialogue with a sample of the population.
Treat the panel seriously. Be prepared to listen, learn and act.

Using representative groups

Use to... discuss issues of relevance to specific groups with representative organisations.

PROS

- ✓ A regular and reliable channel of communication
- ✓ Numbers to be dealt with are more manageable
- ✓ Allows you to tap into information being collected by independent organisations
- ✓ Can provide quantitative and qualitative information
- ✓ Can help you get views of particular groups such as minority ethnic communities or people with disabilities
- ✓ Relatively quick and cheap
- ✓ Gives you a chance to explore views in depth
- ✓ Allows you to discuss detailed solutions with people with some technical knowledge
- ✓ Early warnings of future problems can be acted on

CONS

- ✗ Depending on the type of organisation, the group may contain particularly motivated people who aren't fully representative of users
- ✗ May not provide statistical information
- ✗ Can become very time-consuming in complex situations
- ✗ Those involved may be perceived to have 'sold out' by more radical members of the community
- ✗ The wider community may reject the group's recommendations

Many, mainly voluntary, organisations know what is happening on the ground, and are in a good position to tell you what users think about your service and the problems they have. They may be advice agencies, single interest groups or support groups, or may see themselves as having a 'watchdog' role.

Representative organisations may be made up of people who have a particular interest in a subject and have strong views, and you may need to take this into account. They should not be used as your only means of consultation, but will be a useful source of qualitative information about your services. They can also help you find out where need more in-depth research. Representative organisations are a ready-made source of information. They may carry out their own research or be able to provide your with feedback on users' experiences. Many organisations are experts in particular fields; for example, Community Health Councils see large numbers of people who are having problems with health services and the Citizens' Advice Bureau advises people on a wide variety of subjects including benefits, housing and court procedures.

Organisations may also be able to get the views of particular groups of users, such as people with disabilities and their carers, or minority ethnic groups, perhaps through their advice work or because they are part of a network.

Points to think about:

- Finding groups: find local groups, through your library, local Council for Voluntary Services, Race Equality Council, Citizens' Advice Bureau or other advice agency. Or look in various directories. The Communications Team is developing a list of groups you may find useful to consult.
- What they do: find out what the group does, who it represents, its priorities, what its specific interests are, how it carries out its work and so on.
- Involving them: discuss how best you can work together. You could meet individual groups, or hold forums where several groups get together. Fit the engagement into your own strategic planning. Do you want to consult organisations every year, or only when you review your charter or management plan, or on a regular basis throughout the year?
- How they can help: think about whether organisations could help you by carrying out research. But don't always expect them to do it for nothing – they may be cheaper than a commercial operation, but running voluntary groups costs money.
- Timing: give voluntary bodies time to respond – they are busy and may be inundated with statutory agencies' engagement requirements.

Costs: relatively cheap.

Use to... discuss general and specific issues of relevance to particular groups of users/consumers.

To avoid being narrowly focussed and tokenistic, aim to work with representative groups alongside other consultative populations such as local residents.

Workshops/conference

Use to... enable collaborative work on a problem or task.

PROS

- ✓ Good for discussing complex issues, analysing competing options and generating ideas
- ✓ Encourages joint working and problem solving
- ✓ Maximises feedback from participants
- ✓ Can identify issues that may have not been considered
- ✓ Mixing groups helps each other to better understand the others' point of view
- ✓ Independent facilitation can increase credibility of process and results

CONS

- ✗ Unsuitable for addressing issues where very large numbers of people want to participate
- ✗ Hostile participants may be group working as a means to neutralise dissent
- ✗ Analysing discussions can be time consuming
- ✗ Can be perceived to exclude those unwilling to accept the starting assumptions or the way that issues are framed

Workshops are always by invitation only, and are processes designed to enable people to work actively and collaboratively on a problem or task. Their purposes and processes also mean that they are generally longer than other types of meetings, rarely lasting less than half a day.

Workshops often employ professional facilitators or mediators who encourage group working, deal with conflict and keep the focus firmly on the task in hand. Facilitators need a wide repertoire of skills and techniques, and to be flexible enough to use whichever are required from moment to moment.

Points to think about:

- Purpose: consider its overall purpose: is it to solve problems, build relationships, or just explore the issues?
- Outputs: decide what specific outputs you want, what status these outputs should have, and how you will use them.
- Participants: carefully consider who should be invited, bearing in mind the purpose of the workshop, the issues to be addressed, the outputs, their status and the methods to be used – these all affect each other.

Costs: high.

Use to... maximise joint working and problem solving.

Make sure methods and ground rules are agreed in advance.

World Café

Use to....drawing out the collective wisdom of large groups of diverse people

PROS

- ✓ An easy to use method for having conversations which can help people to see new ways to make a difference in their lives and work
- ✓ It is very flexible and can be adapted to many different purposes
- ✓ Can help to reduce conflict as people get the opportunity to discuss their issues between themselves and hear other people's points of view before sharing their insights with the whole group
- ✓ It builds capacity and confidence – the people in the room are able to solve their own problems.

CONS

- ✗ They are not useful if you need to go into deep discussions about something
- ✗ Can be chaotic and noisy
- ✗ Needs to be at least an hour and a half long, ideally two hours
- ✗ Needs to be held in a flexible space using small tables

How do I plan a world café?

- Decide on purpose of café and who to invite (ideally this will be the whole system to create change – see below on ARE IN)
- Name your café (see below notes on appreciative inquiry topic)
- Frame the invitation
- Develop progressive questions three rounds of conversations approx. 20 to 30 minutes each
- You may want people to start in pairs then move onto tables of 4
- Cafes should run for the minimum 1 hour maximum 2 hours
- Ask questions that are meaningful, challenging and matter to the people involved

Remember: You need diversity for a world café to work properly – if everyone comes from the same background you are unlikely to gain new insights. If you don't get the right diverse group attending it may not be worth continuing – go back and think again about how to encourage the people that you need there.

When considering who to invite, you could consider ARE IN. Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff recommend that a whole system event or process should include participants who 'ARE IN'.

Authority to act

Resources (contacts, times or money)

Expertise in the issues to be considered

Information about the topic

Need to be involved because they will be affected by the outcome and can speak to the consequences.

What do I need to set up a world café?

- Ideally somewhere with natural light or an outdoor view
- 4 or 5 people around each small café style table
- Paper table cloths/flip charts on top of colourful table cloths
- Coloured pens in mugs or spread across tables
- Post it notes
- Refreshments and snacks provided on another table
- Questions written out on flip chart sheets (people need to be able to refer to the questions you have asked)
- Wall or display space for sharing whole group insights

Optional depending on size:

- Chime or bell to get people's attention or explain that when you put your hand up it is time to be quiet
- Small vases of flowers
- Sweets or grapes on tables
- Coloured craft pipe cleaners – having something to fiddle with can help some people to concentrate
- Sheets with quotes or positive statements around room that people taking part will recognise eg Gandhi, Martin Luther King
- Projector and screen
- Background music
- Microphones
- Flip charts
- Large post it notes or sheets for sharing whole group insights

How do I run a world café?

- Welcome people as they arrive
- Explain the purpose of the café
- Read out the questions and make sure they are visible
- Explain the café etiquette
- Don't explain the whole process as this is too much for people to take in
- Encourage people to write, doodle and draw key ideas
- Let people know when to move and encourage them to sit with people they do not know
- Ask one person to host on each table and ask others to move
- Ask the hosts to share the main conversation ideas from the initial conversation and encourage others to feed in and build on it with their own initial conversations, thoughts and ideas
- Move people a couple of times to ensure ideas are linked and connected
- Share discoveries and insights in a whole group conversation

Some ideas for sharing whole group insights

- Use a graphic recorder/visual minutes – draw the whole group conversation
- Take a gallery tour – pin table cloths onto the walls
- Post Insights – post its
- Create idea clusters from post its – you could play bingo
- Create a mind map with themes and prioritise what is important – you could
- Make a story – create a newspaper or story book after the event to share with a wider audience

If you wish to go deeper into issues you could run an open space session after the group has created a mind map and prioritised what is most important (please see below for more information on open space).

Café etiquette

- Focus on what matters
- Contribute your thinking
- Speak your mind and heart
- Listen to understand
- Link and connect ideas
- Listen together for insights and deeper questions
- Play, doodle, draw – writing on table cloths is encouraged
- Have fun!

Question Design

Good question design is critical for a successful cafe.

World cafes can explore a single question or several progressive questions.

An Appreciative Inquiry approach can be used to design world café questions.

For more information visit http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appreciative_inquiry

When to use it

The world café format can be used for small to medium meetings but they can also be used you large events eg summit or big conversation.

When not to use it

There are not useful if you need to go deep into something – gives you more breadth than depth.

Area forums

PROS

- ✓ Encourage openness and transparency around council decisions
- ✓ Discussions can be tailored to the concerns of local residents
- ✓ Provide direct interface between elected members and their communities
- ✓ Provide information on services and policies affecting local area
- ✓ Provide an opportunity for local people to have an input into issues that affect their neighbourhood
- ✓ Actions raised are monitored and fed back
- ✓ Good for reaching people in their own areas and addressing specific local concerns
- ✓ If all relevant agencies are there all complaints can be dealt with, which increases credibility with the public
- ✓ A relatively small budget can be quite significant for a small forums
- ✓ Can allow for small group discussions and feedback

CONS

- ✗ Attended by the 'usual suspects'
- ✗ May be dominated by one person or particular view point
- ✗ Needs commitment to keep it going
- ✗ Be prepared for people just complaining early on
- ✗ Danger of becoming rule bound and bureaucratic
- ✗ Danger of confusion or conflict Over the respective roles of councillors and other local representatives

Area forums are ongoing quarterly meetings held in a locality. Often the meetings are attended by local councillors; together with senior representatives from other local authorities e.g. the Police and the Primary Care Trusts, to debate key topics and answer residents' questions face to face.

A cross section of the community are invited to become members (although anyone can come along):

- Local residents
- Local businesses
- Local community groups

The forums are normally run in the evenings and chaired by a local councillor. Recommendations are fed into the organisations decision making processes. Forums focus on topics of particular interest to local communities in the area. Some forums have a newsletter and use this to feedback to members and minutes are made available online.

When to use it:

- When you want to give local people information about new policies and legislation that will affect the local area
- When you want to find out what people think of a new development in the area
- When you want to find out what issues are most important to local people

When not to use it:

- You want to make a decision on the local area
- You want a representative sample of the local population
- You want to engage 'hard to reach' or 'seldom heard groups'

Our research has shown that Lancaster districts LGBT community think that local forums are not an effective way of engaging with their communities.

Whereas, Muslim, Hindu, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and Chinese communities think that local forums are an effective way for engaging with their communities.

Cost: low to medium. The main cost is staff time to plan and attend the meetings and respond to feedback.

Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings

Police and Communities Together (PACT), is a method of community engagement and consultation which gives members of the community the opportunity to meet with their local neighbourhood policing team and to identify local issues, crimes or disorder which are affecting their quality of life.

PACT is a month-long engagement process enabling people to raise concerns that impact on their quality of life and which they want the police and/or partners to tackle on their behalf. Opportunities to raise these concerns will vary and may, for example, take the format of a street meeting, police surgery, door knock, supermarket display/stall, through a themed PACT meeting or through conducting high visibility patrol work within the neighbourhood. PACT will also involve a meeting which is held during every month at a time and location which meets the needs of the public and partner agencies. The meetings are publicised and are open for all members of the local community and their representatives to attend in order to meet their neighbourhood policing team and, where necessary, raise concerns.

A PACT Panel is the multi-agency group that meets following the PACT meeting to decide, in partnership with the officer, which of the local concerns raised through the PACT process, will be addressed as priorities during the month. Through a tasking and co-ordinating process, members of the panel will then take responsibility and accountability for working together to address those priorities.

Generally, priorities should be addressed and resolved in partnership between the community and panel members, but where this is not possible; they will be escalated into the local divisional tasking and co-ordinating processes or Community Safety Partnerships for further action.

PACT enables the Constabulary to truly engage with local people including the diverse and hard to reach communities. This is achieved by providing local people with access to local policing and partnership activity; offering opportunities to influence local priorities; delivering positive interventions with partners to tackle identified priorities and providing answers on what has been achieved. It also demonstrates that local officers are accountable to local people and recognises this by publicising and delivering at least a minimum standard of agreed support and activity to address their concerns through Neighbourhood Policing.

For further information on neighbourhood policing please visit:

 www.lancashire.police.uk/about-us/neighbourhood-policing

Planning for real

Use to... allow the public to influence planning, development and other issues related to a specific geographical area or community.

PROS

- ✓ A highly visual technique which allows people to take part without needing any particular skills
- ✓ Allows people to engage hands on with issues that affect them
- ✓ Makes the engagement process more fun and rewarding for everyone involved
- ✓ Models can be kept and used again if issues in the area are revisited
- ✓ People can see results of different options and their input helps to develop new ideas
- ✓ Allows people to raise problems in non confrontational way
- ✓ Works well for physical and environmental issues
- ✓ As this is an informal process, it presents a less threatening environment for those who are unsure about becoming involved

CONS

- ✗ People need to attend to be involved, so may exclude some people and not be totally representative
- ✗ May be dominated by those used to working in large groups
- ✗ NIF suggest full benefits may not be achieved without proper training of facilitator, therefore this should be considered
- ✗ Usually focused on local level – can be hard to scale up
- ✗ Can take a lot of time and effort to organise and build the model

Planning for Real is a technique which promotes community involvement in plans and proposals for an area or designing buildings. It involves the creation of a 3D-scale model of the area, which is used as a focus for people to input their ideas and priorities for changes or developments. Models can be made by local people to create a sense of ownership. People do not have to attend at same time or place and people with an interest in the area can also be involved. The technique was pioneered by the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation (NIF).

Points to think about:

The process needs time in order to be effective. Several weeks of planning and preparation may be required, including the building of a 3D-scale model, events in the community and the involvement of 'expert' advisors. Ask participants to prioritise using now, soon and later to develop an action plan.

- Involving the local community from the start of the process may encourage people to participate and give a sense of ownership to the exercise. Involve people in delivery, monitoring and evaluation.
- The model needs to be designed so that is easy to transport as it needs to be displayed at a number of venues in the community in order for it to allow a greater number of people to have the opportunity to be involved.
- Care needs to be taken to record the suggestions made and the outcome of any prioritising exercise which takes place.
- The names of all participants must be recorded for feedback purposes.
- The height of the model needs to be considered so that children and wheelchair users are able to contribute. The model needs to be displayed in accessible venues.

Costs: include costs for training in the technique and for any materials to be used to construct a model. Costs are dependent on number of events and size of venue and need to commission a trained facilitator.

When to use it:

- When you want decisions to reflect local priorities
- Where you want to mobilise local support and enthusiasm

When not to use it:

- Do not have buy in of important decision makers
- If you are short of time/staff

Use to... allow the public to influence planning, development and other environmental issues. Relate ideas to specific geographical areas.

Useful for allowing the public to express their ideas when changes are to be made to an area or a community building.

Visioning and voting

Use to... explore the community's vision for the future and develop a shared aim for further action.

PROS

- ✓ Can start to deal with conflicting interests
- ✓ Is a broad and exploratory technique
- ✓ Allows for creative thinking
- ✓ Is claimed to empower citizens as they are able to demonstrate that they are experts in their own lives
- ✓ Good starting point for continued partnership as it can establish good community relations

CONS

- ✗ Time taken to organise the event
- ✗ Cost of specialist facilitator is no such skills available in house
- ✗ Fewer examples of good practice as relatively new approaches
- ✗ Time commitment involved by some methods could bias the type of person about to attend/take part

There is a wide range of techniques which can be described as 'visioning'. They may combine the development of an overarching vision with the creation of incremental visions that are more pragmatic and down to earth. They help the community to establish a vision of what sort of future they would like for their area, working alongside councillors and staff. This may involve picturing alternatives, sometimes with the help of expert advice or visual aids and voting on preferred options. Many techniques also include elements of needs assessment and contribute to the generation of ideas and plans for action.

Points to think about:

- This is a relatively new area for most people, and therefore required particular skills in facilitation and broad, blue sky thinking.
- There may be conflicts of interest which arise between participants which are not able to be resolved.
- It is able to go further than achieving consensus which often leaves some people dissatisfied with the outcome. Visioning can enable people to be creative, developing new ways of thinking about an issue.

There are various visioning techniques:

Future search conference

In this method, a large number of stakeholders (ideally around 65) are brought together for a three-day conference, the aim of which is to produce a consensus vision. Some activity takes place in small workshop sessions and the group comes together as a whole after working through five phases. The overall aim is to develop a shared vision and agree on future action. The size of the group allows for a mixed, representative sample.

Future workshops

Developed by Jungk and Mullert, these are workshops where participants work together to create ideas for desirable futures. A future workshop covers several phases, from preparation through critique, fantasy and finally implementation. At the end of the process, it is hoped the group will generate tangible ideas and plans for action.

Where appropriate, visioning may include the use of photographic materials to stimulate thought amongst participants or help them to begin to make choices about service options that are available.

Voting

Voting can be used in conjunction with visioning or independently. One example of this is mounted photographs being displayed and each participant having coloured spots which they are able to denote a first, second and third choice preference for a suggestion. After general open discussion (no attempt to reach a decision), participants are allowed to move freely around the venue, chat to others and then place their 'votes' beside the photograph. This technique enables prioritisation to take place without conflicting viewpoints having to be aired. For sensitive issues, voting 'slips' can be issued after discussion which can be posted back to the authority.

Use to... explore the community's vision for the future. Community visioning works by enabling people to think differently about their lives and engage their imagination.

Helps the community to agree on a vision for how they would like services to be provided in the future.

Citizen advisory committees

PROS

- ✓ Helps services to understand the users perspective
- ✓ Can provide early warning of potential problems and be s useful sounding board to test plans and ideas
- ✓ Regular meetings leads to participants getting to know each other, which can help discussions

CONS

- ✗ Requires long term commitment from participants therefore recruiting and retaining participants can be difficult
- ✗ Can appear to be exclusive to those that are not included
- ✗ Only involves a small number of people and is therefore not statistically valid
- ✗ Participants can become less representative over time, membership may need to be reviewed regularly

Citizen advisory groups are made up of between 10 and 30 members of the public who sit on a committee to inform and advise decision making. They can consist of a representative sample of the local population e.g. community group representatives or specific individuals.

When to use it:

- When need to create on-going dialogue with a group of local representatives.

When not to use it:

- Do not set up a group if you are not willing to take on board their advice and recommendations.

Cost: medium. The cost does not come from the meetings themselves but the recruitment, support and rewards. Takes about 3 months to set up.

Citizens' juries

Use to... listen to conflicting arguments and evidence before finally making a decision, although this is not binding.

PROS

- ✓ Numbers to be dealt with are more manageable
- ✓ Allows you to tap into information being collected by independent organisations
- ✓ Can help you get views of particular groups such as minority ethnic communities or people with disabilities
- ✓ Gives you a chance to explore views in depth
- ✓ Explore very complex issues
- ✓ Results can also be used to generate a wider public debate about issues
- ✓ Allows you to discuss detailed solutions with people with some technical knowledge

CONS

- ✗ Depending on the type of organisation, the group may contain particularly motivated people who aren't fully representative of users
- ✗ May not provide statistical information
- ✗ Only involves a very small number of people, which means public may still hold a less informed view
- ✗ Groups may require a considerable amount of time to respond
- ✗ No guarantee jurors will make a rational decision
- ✗ Resources – pay for time, accommodation, expenses, officer time etc
- ✗ Can take 2 to 4 months to set up
- ✗ Time consuming

A Citizens' Jury can be seen as essentially a sophisticated focus group modelled on the structure of a criminal jury. Between 12 and 16 local representatives are selected to act as the 'jury' and are paid to listen to the conflicting arguments and evidence around an issue for up to week before finally making a decision. Very few issues actually involve only a dozen or so stakeholders, so this needs to be seen as a research method and not as a participative process.

The two main qualities of Citizens' Juries are that they allow people time to think and explore subjects widely and in great detail, and they are composed of 'ordinary' people who can bring common sense and everyday experiences to subjects to which experts may have been too close to be able to remain objective.

At their best, Citizens' Juries can provide a fascinating insight into how people think about an issue as they become gradually better informed about it, and the results can carry real authority, even though the process itself may have no official status.

Points to think about:

- Budget: be realistic when drawing up your budget, because Citizens' Juries are relatively expensive.
- Identify the questions: decide exactly the parameters on which they will be asked to pass judgement.
- Appoint a moderator/facilitator: this person is crucial – they need to be suitably qualified and independent, and will brief the jury and oversee the process.
- Recruit the jury: it needs to be a broadly representative group of around 8-12 people, although up to 20 people is possible.
- Witnesses: identify suitable expert witnesses who can explain the issues and be questioned by the jury.
- Results: it is good practice to publish the outcomes of the process, whether the jury's recommendations are followed and if not, why not.

Costs: high. Usually between £20,000 and £40,000 depending on how long the process lasts and what methodology is used.

When to use it

- When informed public input is needed
- Where there is a specific, relatively small scale question to answer
- When the will exists to action the jury's recommendations

When not to use it:

- You have already decided how to proceed
- The issue is not of significant interest to the public

Use to... obtain an informed opinion on a specific, often controversial issue.

Make sure the moderator is suitably qualified and independent.

Ballots/ referenda

Use to... get a yes or no answer in response to a question put to the local population in a poll.

PROS

- ✓ Easy to interpret results
- ✓ Increasingly easy for people to participate

CONS

- ✗ No qualitative information
- ✗ Results can be based on superficial uninformed responses but there's no way for you to find this out
- ✗ Results can be swayed by the amount and quality of information provided by supporters of each option, rather than by the issue itself
- ✗ Often gets low turnouts
- ✗ Deliberate polling techniques can be very expensive

With a few high profile exceptions, national referenda are rare in this country, but they have been used at local levels. People are asked to vote either for or against an option or a limited number of options.

Points to think about:

- Usage: referenda and ballots will only be suitable for some issues. You will only get a 'yes/no' answer, so if you are looking for qualitative comments this is not the right technique. Issues should be those that will be of significant interest to your users, and the question(s) need to be phrased in a way that allows people to make a clear choice between the options. If the issue does not lend itself to a 'yes/no' answer, then avoid this approach.
- Context: deliberative polling, where those taking part are provided with information in order to give an informed response, recognises that people make different choice when they have different amounts of information. Any sort of polling should not be carried out in a vacuum. People should have the opportunity to debate the issues, hear from supporters of all the different options, and make a considered choice.
- Methods: a variety of different methods can be used – postal ballots and personal voting are the most common at the moment, but information technology is opening up new possibilities. Electronic systems to allow groups of people to vote for particular options are already in use, and telephone and internet voting for the home are often seen on the television. These do however rely upon people having access to the technology. Increasing opportunities for people to use these methods are likely to improve participation levels, but there are issues surrounding confidentiality and prevention of misuse that may be significant as these areas develop.

Costs: very expensive.

Use to... get clear mandate (depending on response) for particular action.

You will only get a yes/no answer, so if you are looking for qualitative comments this is not the right technique.

Participatory budgeting/community kitties

PROS

- ✓ Empowers people to make decisions about spending
- ✓ Identifies new ways to deliver more effective services
- ✓ Can be a very public, open and transparent process
- ✓ Increases the number of people taking part in local democratic processes
- ✓ Enhances positive perceptions of public officials and elected members
- ✓ Builds social capital by creating forums for local groups to meet, negotiate and take decisions together
- ✓ Helps develop the skills, experience and confidence of those involved
- ✓ Can bring different communities together
- ✓ Encourages a greater understanding of the complexities of public budgeting, including compromises and trade-offs
- ✓ Supports those in need by empowering them and increasing their influence
- ✓ Can show transparency and legitimacy, particularly in the working of local partnerships
- ✓ Adaptable to a range of different situations
- ✓ Can show transparency and legitimacy

CONS

- ✗ Likely to be ineffective without being part of a wider empowerment policy
- ✗ Can create unrealistic expectations amongst people participating if managed badly
- ✗ Works best where community is already highly active
- ✗ Can be perceived as undermining the role of elected representatives
- ✗ Requires investment in good community development to support the process
- ✗ Risk that groups may dominate
- ✗ May not be representative
- ✗ Can take a number of years to become effective and generate sufficient participation to achieve results
- ✗ Ineffective in the absence of sustained political will to empower to citizens and service users
- ✗ High initial cost requiring a repeating programme to maximise benefits

Participatory budgeting (PB) involves local people directly in making decisions about budget issues, either at a neighbourhood level or more strategic level.

Participatory budgeting (PB) allows the citizens of an area (neighbourhood, regeneration or local authority area) to participate in the allocation of part of the local Council's or other statutory agency's (health services, police) available financial resources. PB aims to increase transparency, accountability, understanding and social inclusion in local government affairs.

PB applies to a varying amount of the local Council's budget and the actual process is developed to suit local circumstances.

In practice, PB provides citizens with information that enables them to be engaged in prioritising the needs of their neighbourhoods propose and debate new services and projects and set budgets in a democratic and transparent way. As the process becomes embedded it involves citizens being engaged in an annual budgetary cycle of setting priorities and budgets and monitoring the delivery of projects and services.

PB commonly operates at different levels, depending on the purpose of the process:

Participatory local grant-making: Communities decide which local organizations receive public funding through voting at a decision day event. Often a mechanism to give grants to community organizations, but can also involve funding public agencies delivering local services. Also known as community kitties, it is good for building trust and empowering groups at the local level.

Neighbourhood budgeting: Residents engage in budgetary decisions to direct service delivery within their local geographic community, often using discretionary or regeneration funds. Builds community cohesion and community capacity and targets money based on good local knowledge.

City wide Budgeting: The local authority enables residents to influence mainstream services in a direct and participatory way through a comprehensive process. Often involving a number of rounds of budget discussions and covering a wide range of budgets areas. Enhances trust in representative democratic structures, improves dialogue between citizens and service providers about what works, and so improves public services.

Partnership budgeting: By adopting a shared mechanism for their community engagement a number of agencies can work together. Perhaps involves pooling investment budgets and establishing new ways for geographic or other communities to influence the budgets or commissioning decisions of partners. Enhances the scope and legitimacy of non-elected partnerships, improves joint working and enables multi-agency solutions to better address embedded social inequalities.

Lancaster City Council piloted the first model of PB in its Poulton neighbourhood, Morecambe, through 'In Your Hands' in 2008. To find out more visit www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/case-studies/in-your-hands-morecambe

For more information visit www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/about

When to use:

- You want to get local peoples directly involved in determining how to spend public money
- You want local peoples input into spending priorities
- You want to increase your understanding of local needs
- You want to increase the publics awareness of the trade offs involved in the budget

You shouldn't use PB if:

- You are unwilling to delegate any real power to participants
- The trade offs are technical and not of any interest to the public
- You are looking for a one off project

Cost: City wide PB is high in cost, especially in the first year of operation, although the costs can be lower at neighbourhood level. The main cost is staff time and marketing. Good evaluation processes are needed to fine tune a PB process and demonstrate an impact on services. Evidence from overseas and the UK shows that when done well PB can reduce the overall cost of local government by better targeting of resources, can enhance the standing of representative democracy locally, and strengthen communities through greater local empowerment.

PB is most effective when continued over a number of budgetary cycles. Communities become more able to make effective decisions and public agencies become better providing relevant and meaningful information.

Our own research has shown that Lancaster districts Chinese, Polish, Hindu and LGBT communities think community kitties (the name originally given to PB programmes within a neighbourhood) is an effective way of engaging with their communities.

Piloting changes

PROS

- ✓ Enables informed judgements to be made about costs and benefits
- ✓ Allows discussion with users and potential users to resolve problems at pilot stage

CONS

- ✗ There may be suspicion that the results are a forgone conclusion
- ✗ Less effective if evaluation is not carefully planned
- ✗ Circumstances may change during the life of the pilot so that the lessons are less relevant to the whole service
- ✗ If unsuccessful, can prejudice people against possible changes in the future

Trying out changes on a small area of your service is a useful way to test whether those changes are going to work for the whole service. It is difficult to predict all the issues that will arise when you introduce something new. The information you give people about how planned changes will impact on them may lack detail, and prevent them from providing informed comments on your proposals. Piloting the changes can give them (as well as you!) real material to consider.

Points to think about:

- **Pilot area:** the area in which you are going to pilot your changes needs to be as typical of the rest of the service as possible so that the lessons learned are relevant.
- **Resources:** the resources invested in a pilot are obviously less significant than if you were going to introduce a change to your whole service, but pilots do demand significant resources for effective monitoring and evaluation, and you need to build these in from the start.
- **Presentation:** you need to be clear about the status of the pilot. Some people may think that you've already decided what you are going to do. You need to convince them that you do have an open mind about how the service will develop, and that you value their views.
- **Managing change:** throughout the pilot you need to be discussing progress and problems with people, and trying to address issues that arise. You don't need to wait until the end of a pilot to adjust things if it's very clear that something isn't going to work – take the opportunity to try something else. But do give changes a chance to be properly considered. Recognise that people at first may be suspicious and negative, but they may change their views when they have given the changes a chance.
- **Evaluation:** the point of a pilot is to test how well something works on a small scale so you can decide whether to extend it. Evaluation of any exercise is therefore fundamental. You need to establish clearly both what you are going to measure (your success and failure criteria), and how you are going to measure it (including different ways of asking people for their views).

Costs: piloting change is cheaper than introducing change to a whole area – but evaluation costs may be high. This is a way to try out significant changes to service that could be controversial.

Use to... test whether changes are acceptable and meet needs before full implementation.

Evaluation checklist

Process

- Did the exercise reach a representative sample of the population or, where this is appropriate, your identified target group?
- Was the response rate high enough to give reliable results?
- Were the results disseminated to:
 - Consultees?
 - The wider public, if only a smaller group was involved in the engagement?
 - Relevant staff in the organisation, including front-line staff?
 - Relevant partner organisations?
- If the exercise did not meet its objectives, why was this and what steps can be taken to prevent similar problems in the future?

Costs

- What did the exercise cost, both directly and indirectly?
- What proportion is this of the overall cost of the relevant service?
- How does the cost compare with other similar exercises in the authority or other similar authorities?
- Has the cost been shared by designing the exercise to be valuable to more than one service or organisation?

Outcomes

- Has the exercise helped to improve the cost-effectiveness of the service by making it match users' needs more closely?
- Did the engagement directly inform a decision, or shape policy or service delivery arrangements?
- Were the engagement results used to set local performance standards and targets?

Some Useful websites

Look for good practice examples and consider using creative and innovative methods to encourage participation.

Cabinet Office Consultation Principles - <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/consultation-principles-guidance>

Ipsos MORI - www.ipsos-mori.com/

Local Authorities Research Intelligence Association (LARIA) - www.laria.gov.uk/

Market Research Society (MRS) - www.mrs.org.uk/

Urban Forum - <http://www.urbanforum.org.uk/>

Involve - <http://www.involve.org.uk/>

Community Development Foundation - <http://www.cdf.org.uk>

Community Planning - <http://www.communityplanning.net/>

Participation Compass - <http://www.peopleandparticipation.net>

Participation Works (for engaging with young people) - <http://www.participationworks.org.uk/>