

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT



JULY 2010

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Who is the toolkit for?

For anyone who wants to engage their community in consultation or discussion – from local voluntary and community organisations to councillors and officers in public agencies.

Using the toolkit

The toolkit is designed to be a reference and information source for anyone thinking about community engagement work. It can help you decide whether engagement is appropriate and if so what approach to adopt. There is no right or wrong approach – every issue and community is different.

Suggestions for getting the most out of the toolkit

- Add yourself to some email resource circulation lists – some of the organisations listed in the ‘Additional Resources’ section of the toolkit has these.
- Join some of the online ‘communities of practice’ where you can exchange ideas and best practice with those doing similar work to you in other organisations.
- Keep a lookout for any useful information when on courses or seminars.
- Think about setting up an informal session, from time to time to get together with other workers from different organisations to catch up what you are all doing.
- Let colleagues know about the toolkit when you are asked for comments on their consultations

WHAT WE MEAN BY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Community Engagement is a process by which a representative sample of people or an entire community is enabled to take an active and productive part in reviewing, designing, approving, commenting on and influencing the decisions and activities of organisations and agencies.

FIRST THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Is the issue a local/regional/national priority or a priority within the Sustainable Community Strategy, and how does it fit within your overall work and service plan?
- Check for community engagement fatigue. Has this work already been done by somebody else? Has the community been engaged on other issues recently?
- Is community engagement needed? What are the intended outcomes? What else has been done in the area that is similar or linked over the last few years? Could you use this or update / adapt it? Is someone else already looking at this issue? Would it be better to contribute to their work instead?
- Do you have the resources (staff time, expertise and money) to do this work? Who is going to do the work - will you need to buy in specialist support?
- Who do you have to secure support from?
- Do you really know your area and / or community? What is your research and analysis base?
- How will you collect and present your evidence to show outcomes?
- How will you monitor and evaluate the work?
- How do you plan to communicate? How will you let others know what is happening and show that the outcomes have been achieved and the work has made a difference?

Checklists

Here are some checklists with suggestions of the points you need to consider:

[Checklist at the strategic/board level](#)

[Checklist at the organisational / management level](#)

[Checklist at the community level](#)

[Checklist at operational/delivery level](#)

Checklist at the strategic/board level

- Be clear about the policy and statutory context within which community engagement is planned / taking place
- Establish how engaging the community is intended to inform the services, programme or initiative you are responsible for
- Assess how what you are doing will impact on, or be influenced by, what is happening with the communities concerned
- Evaluate the differing levels of interest and influence that key stakeholders have in the community engagement outcomes and its implications
- Consider what organisational issues may need to be addressed to ensure community engagement is meaningful
- Determine the level of resources that are available for engaging the community
- Identify who will have lead responsibility for community engagement within your organisation / partnership

- Develop a clear set of community engagement principles
- Produce a written community engagement strategy / strategic plan with specific targets and milestones
- Ensure there is full commitment to implementing the strategy
- Provide leadership in implementing the strategy
- Take responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the strategy

Checklist at the organisational / management level

- Determine what your community engagement principles mean in practice
- Undertake a stakeholder analysis to identify who needs to be involved in developing and implementing the community engagement strategy
- Profile the community - its composition, needs, concerns and resources
- Establish a key stakeholder group to contribute to the detailed design, implementation and evaluation of the strategy
- Ensure that all those involved understand what the strategy is trying to achieve and their part within it
- Identify and address staff / volunteer training and support needs and any community capacity issues
- Determine who needs to be engaged, at what level and over what period
- Select appropriate tools that will facilitate community engagement
- Identify the barriers to engagement and the means of overcoming these, including any access and cultural issues by completing an Equality Impact Assessment
- Decide operational priorities in the context of available resources and time constraints
- Establish ways of giving feedback on progress to the community and other stakeholders
- Produce a detailed action plan for implementing the strategy and assessing its progress
- Implement the action plan and up-date on a regular basis

Checklist at the community level

- Why is the community engagement happening? What's the bigger picture?
- Is there a genuine commitment from the agencies concerned?
- Has the community been kept informed about what is planned, or what is happening?
- Has the community been consulted over the amount of involvement that it wants to have in any planned developments?
- Who decides who represents the community and are representatives accountable
- Is there practical support to ensure the community can fully participate?
- Has the community had the opportunity to contribute to the decisions that are being made?
- Has the community entered into any ongoing partnership with different agencies to work together to bring about change?
- Are the community involved in making judgements about the success or effectiveness of what is happening?
- What happens next?

Checklist at operational/delivery level

- Ensure you understand your role and responsibilities in engaging the community
- Consider what changes you may need to make in how you work, taking account of the community engagement principles
- Make sure that you have the time, resources and support to do what's being asked of you
- Identify any training and support needs you may have
- Get to know the community you are working with and listen to what people are saying about its needs and concerns
- Let people know what it is you are trying to do
- Identify ways in which the community can meaningfully influence the services you are delivering
- Tell the community about the difference they can make by getting involved, but make sure to get the balance right between encouraging aspirations without raising false expectations
- Work to a clear action plan and record the progress being made
- Keep everyone well informed

HELPFUL HINTS

Build engagement in: don't bolt it on

Effective community engagement should be thought about at the beginning of a project, not at the end. Engaging with people at every stage of the process will improve the quality of your work and create a sense of ownership amongst the people you have included.

Start early

Engagement takes time. It cannot be arranged, carried out, or used if you hurry. The most common outcome of rushed engagement is a poor one. It will make you feel that you wasted your time, and the public will feel the same.

Don't rely on apathy

Despite a widespread belief that people aren't interested, the reality is that they do care about the issues that affect them.

Be clear about the constraints

Don't promise things you can't deliver. This is a common failure of community engagement. Be clear where the boundaries are, who makes the final decisions and what resources are available.

Engagement is a marathon not a sprint

Delivering change can take a long time. Be prepared for the long haul; everyone gets disheartened if things take forever to happen, so be realistic about timescales

Communicate, communicate, communicate

Keep people informed. Everyone you involve needs to receive feedback so they know what is being done as a result of their involvement, especially if you eventually chose to do something differently. Show what has been achieved. It builds ownership and enhances reputation.

Also, share what you've learned with colleagues

Have a champion

The most successful strategies have someone – or often lots of people at different levels – who really believes in the cause pushing them forward. If community engagement is important, make sure it's included as part of people's roles.

Make it meaningful

Remember that any plans you make should lead to action. Everyone gets bored of taking part when nothing actually happens.

Assess your goals at every stage

Keep asking "is what we are trying to do realistic?" Targets should be clear and achievable. Have milestones along the way. If the direction of your project does change, make sure you tell everyone why.

Use what already exists

Don't reinvent the wheel. Find out what groups, research or ideas already exist and use them.

Good practice

Look at what other people are doing to build on good practice.

WHAT TYPE OF ENGAGEMENT?

Use the Community Engagement Model below to help you decide.

THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MODEL

	In other words...	What it means
Empowering	We help people to take responsibility for doing or running something themselves...	A group or community has achieved autonomous, independent or arms-length control over planning, commissioning, management, delivery and evaluation of projects and services; public service providers may have a monitoring or advisory role
Participating	We mobilise the community to help us decide what to do...	People are supported and enabled to represent their community, evaluate services, highlight specific issues and develop solutions in partnership with decision-makers
Involving	We bring people together to talk about issues and ideas...	Members of the community come together to share experiences and work collectively to identify potential solutions. Decisions on what actions to take are influenced but remain the responsibility of decision-makers
Consulting	We ask people what they think...	Measuring public opinion on an issue or proposal
Informing	We tell people something...	Information is made available to the whole community or part of it, in an accessible way

The diagram demonstrates that there are different levels of community engagement. They range from simply informing the public, right through to 'empowerment' where power and responsibility is entrusted to communities or groups. This does not mean that empowered communities are, or should be, the ultimate objective of community engagement. What is important is that we know what options are most suitable depending on what needs to be achieved.

Some approaches may be more useful than others. In some cases the community only needs information. In others, seeking to empower communities may be more appropriate for the project or the community. As objectives and priorities change over time, approaches can be adapted or expanded to meet the needs of the council, our partners and the community.

Which part of the Model you use will depend on what you are trying to achieve. Early research to identify previous action and contact with the community will help in avoiding duplication. An example of previous work may be a completed parish plan.

WHAT TYPE OF ACTIVITY?

Once you have decided what level of engagement is appropriate, there are lots of different activities and techniques that you can use – there is no one approach that is better than another. It all depends on who you are working with and what your aim is. Some of the most common ones are explained here but there are many others.

- [Interactive displays](#)
- [Community Auditing and Profiling](#)
- [Opinion surveys, Citizens' Juries & Citizens' Panels](#)
- [Community conferences and seminars](#)
- [Focus Groups](#)
- [Open House events](#)
- [Open Space events](#)
- [Community Visioning](#)
- [Action Research](#)
- [Scenario Planning](#)
- [Planning For Real](#)
- [Participatory Appraisal](#)
- [Participatory Budgeting](#)
- [Conflict Resolution](#)

Interactive displays

Interactive displays offer people the chance to make comments and give feedback on information or options presented to them through the display. Displays can be run in lots of different ways such as setting up a stall, using stickers, comment cards, graffiti walls. All these allow people to write or draw their views on the display. Displays can be a useful way of initially involving people who are not used to being consulted or asked for their views and who may be less confident of expressing them. They can be useful for gathering the views of young people in an informal setting.

Community auditing and profiling

Community auditing means using a range of different techniques and information to build up a picture of the profile, needs and experiences of a group of people. This could be in a particular area, or a particular community of interest. This can include:

- Gathering information about the community
- Focus groups and resident interviews
- Visual methods – for example mapping strengths and weaknesses of the area
- Neighbourhood walks, and so on.

To do a community audit or profile, you will need:

- To be clear why you are doing the audit
- To commit to taking action based on the results of the audit
- To work jointly with the community
- Time and money to plan and undertake the consultation activity.

You should design the community engagement methods that you use based on your own local circumstances. It is important that you involve communities in designing the way your community audit will be undertaken

In addition, the Council website has profiles for each Ward in North Somerset along with information from the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

Opinion surveys, Citizens' Juries and Citizens' Panels

When thinking about surveys or consultations, remember:

- Plan them – who are your target group, what sample will you take, how much time and money do you have at your disposal?
- Garbage in, garbage out. Consultation and surveys must be designed properly, and analysed properly. Whilst there is more than one way of doing consultation well, it is also possible to do it badly.
- You must feed back to consultees. Tell them what you found out and how that has influenced your decisions.

Community conferences and seminars

These bring together local people to be informed through receiving information and inviting their feedback on issues of shared interest (such as plans, service developments or strategies for an area). Conferences can also be the first step in developing more in-depth community involvement.

At the end of the conference there should be a review of the day and clear indications given to participants on what happens next and how their feedback will be used.

Focus groups

Focus groups are small-group discussions that give in-depth information and views on a specific topic. They can be a useful addition to resident surveys as they will allow any emerging issues to be explored in more depth. To be effective, focus groups need to be kept small (no more than 10 people) so that everyone has the opportunity to contribute and there is scope for discussion between participants.

It is essential that if you are using focus groups you allow yourself time to plan and organise. It is a good idea to agree a simple discussion guide in advance which concentrates on the issues you want to explore. You will also need –

- A group leader to start / lead the discussion
- A neutral venue that is accessible to all
- Refreshments (if appropriate)

Sometimes it will be necessary to hold a series of focus groups around a topic as different people will have different views. It is essential that all groups who want to take part are included, so you will need to think carefully about an equalities plan.

'Open House' events

An Open House event often runs over a whole day and evening and is based at a local venue. The aim is to enable local people to gather information and share their views, by choosing which parts of the event they want to participate in. They should be able to gather information in different ways such as through stalls and displays and also be able to share their views through workshops running throughout the event. The principle is that people are able to attend whenever and for as long as they wish, making involvement more accessible to a wider cross section of the community.

This type of event is particularly useful when you want to hear a wide range of views on a certain issue. It is also a good way of making initial contact with communities, and encouraging more intensive future involvement.

A series of Open House events could also be run through a road show programme, with events held in a series of different venues across your area. These road shows

would apply the same principles as the Open House event, but would cover a wider geographical area. This might be particularly useful in rural or remote areas, where people may not be able to easily access a central point.

The Open House approach requires good planning, and consideration of accessibility and ease of participation for all communities and individuals. You will also need funding for hiring venues, staff time to participate in the event, and perhaps additional funding for including a 'fun' element such as games for children, dance, music and food. This can be a good way of attracting people to attend events of this kind.

'Open Space' events

These events bring together a range of people to discuss issues around a central theme and can help translate detailed discussions into action plans. Each event consists of a number of workshops that participants create and manage themselves by using their own knowledge to set the workshop agendas. The workshop groups are a way of bringing together all the issues, data and ideas around a topic. The discussions of each workshop are recorded, and participants can access them at the end of the event. A condensed action plan can then be determined, and circulated to participants.

Open Space events have a flexible framework and can accommodate a range of discussions and a large number of people. They can often be used to deliver a quick response: ideas can be identified, prioritised and implemented quickly. Events can be one-off or run over a period of time. Preparation is essential and you will need to allow sufficient time beforehand to promote the event so that the relevant people are there to allow all the differing views, data and knowledge to come together. The resources required include a good sized venue and a facilitator.

Community visioning

This is a useful process to ensure that local people are involved in community regeneration planning and can be used on an area-based level or to examine specific services, such as health or education. The technique encourages ownership and is a positive approach to talking about change. It also gives an opportunity for the community and service providers to work together on developing agreed, shared priorities and actions. Variations on this process are sometimes known as 'backcasting'.

The technique involves a group of people coming together either at conference or workshop events to develop ideas about what they would like their community ideally to be like or for example how do they see it in 20 or 30 years time? Agreeing the vision and drawing up the action plan with the group may take place over a period of months. It can be a good idea to use a trained facilitator for work with the group(s).

As an alternative to holding separate conferences or seminars, creating the vision group sessions can be tied into other events – this can be helpful if your event resources are limited.

Action research

This is where community groups and/or local people carry out their own research into their communities. The scope of the research and how it will be done is defined by local people and then they are involved in the research. Research can be conducted in a number of ways such as community surveys and open days.

Communities will often need some support to enable them to carry out their own research. This could include:

- Support and advice on the process
- Training on the research techniques they wish to use
- Funding or support in kind for community engagement activities
- Help with practicalities such as venues and publicity

This technique is can be a useful way of conducting research as local people often have good links with the community, and can encourage higher rates of participation. At the same time you are able to support those involved with the project and so help develop and increase their own skills and confidence.

Scenario planning

Scenario planning is a technique that tests out a number of “future scenarios” for the development of a community or neighbourhood. By looking into the future, scenario planning can help communities or organisations explore the impact of decisions. This type of engagement is especially useful when you have a specific scenario such as the closure of a school or the building of a new road. Scenario planning usually takes place over a series of workshops, so you will need to think about an appropriate venue and the length of time you will need. If the scenario is particularly contentious, you may want to think about bringing in an independent facilitator. Participants work in small groups to visualise what things will be like in the future using a range of proposed scenarios. The aim is that this will enable consensus on how best to deal with the issues that either pose a threat or opportunity for the future of an area or organisation.

Planning For Real ®

Planning For Real ® is a registered trademark of the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation (NIF). If you want to run a Planning For Real ® event, you must first contact the NIF to get permission to use the trademark and for help and advice. You may also want to consider attending a Planning For Real ® training course (see the Additional Resources of this toolkit for web links).

Planning for Real ® involves people from the community getting together to make a large 3D model of a neighbourhood. They use their local knowledge to ensure it represents the area as it really is. People then put suggestion cards or cut out materials on the model to show what changes they would like to see. The results will then form the basis of a written action plan. Working groups that involve the community follow up the action plan.

You will need several helpers for this type of engagement and they will need to be briefed beforehand. Their role will be to greet people and guide them through the process, making sure that the venue does not get too crowded as there will be a lot of people moving around.

After your event, all the information should be collated into a draft action plan, which you can then share with the community – you could organise a follow up session to do this. The action plan must be realistic and contain real actions which you can provide feedback on. You will need to be very clear about managing expectations and explain that changes do not always happen immediately and that it is not possible to deliver everything requested.

Planning for Real ® is useful when:

- You need an action plan for an area (a good example is a parish plan)
- There is commitment from a wide range of people in the community including businesses and other organisations in the area
- There are language and/or literacy barriers
- You need to engage with a wide range of age groups and abilities

There is a similar process called 'Enquiry By Design' or EbD – this was used locally recently by South West Regional Development Agency at the Locking Parklands site (former RAF Locking).

Participatory appraisal

This process involves all key stakeholders in assessing the performance and achievements of an organisation, project or initiative. All stakeholders commit to involving others in the process, jointly set the aims for the research and specify how it will be undertaken. The aim is to make sure that the research will be useful to all stakeholders. You may need to allow more time than normal to gain agreement from everyone on the research process. See the additional information section of the toolkit for more details.

Participatory budgeting

You may sometimes see this just referred to as 'PB'. It is a relatively new technique and is a way of involving communities in service planning and delivery of local services. You can use different types of PB depending on your local area and circumstances and it can be a formal regular process or an informal one off event. For example local people could be involved in neighbourhood committees, which develop proposals for budget allocations and projects. Or, you could hold a local event open to anyone, and ask people to make decisions about funding (see the Additional Resources section of the toolkit for more details).

Conflict resolution

The aim of this approach is to begin to build understanding between people who do not agree on a particular issue. It generally involves bringing together a small group of people, and allowing each to explain their views. It is important that people are able to air their worries, but it is also useful to ask participants to spend some time discussing more positive elements of the issue – for example how they think it could be addressed, or something that has worked to address one aspect of the problem.

Often this can be the first stage in a long term process of addressing differences in view points. Sometimes this approach can begin to develop a consensus, through presenting different views, making suggestions and agreeing future approach. However, you should recognise that this can involve long term commitment to discussing the issue and in some cases agreement may never be reached

It is advisable to undergo conflict resolution training yourself before you use this method. In addition, you may need to identify someone to act as facilitator who is seen as independent by all participants. This could involve bringing in someone from outside the area with no history of involvement in the particular issue.

PRACTICALITIES

Successful community engagement requires good planning, organising and thinking about all the practical steps you may need to take. Some of the most common are listed here but there are many others.

- Confidentiality, Data Protection and Freedom of Information (FOI)
- Equalities
- Accessibility of venues
- Accessibility of information
- Child and vulnerable person's protection
- Communications
- Health and Safety including risk assessment
- Consultation and research standards

General practicalities – some key questions

- How much will all this cost? What is your budget?
- Sampling: all engagement work involves identifying a sample of people who you will ask to take part, and thinking about how to engage with them. This may be a sample for a survey or deciding that you want *all* the people in an area to be able to attend a consultation event.
- Do you need to undertake any research relating to the cultural and social norms of the communities you want to work with? Are there any appropriate behaviour issues relating to for example faith based communities you need to think about? Do you need to check faith based festival dates to avoid clashing?
- Are there any issues or history between communities that have created tensions that you need to be aware of?
- Remember that you need to go to the community where they meet and what suits them – not what suits you. Think about what times of day, evening, weekends would be best for the people you are trying to reach?
- If you need to use a venue it should be a place where the community you are working with feel comfortable about being in. What facilities does it have? Is it large enough, accessible and DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant? Is it easy to get to by public transport \walk \cycle \car? Is there any parking nearby including facilities for bicycles? What about travel costs?
- Do you need to arrange crèche facilities, food and refreshments, audio visual or display equipment?
- Do you need to bring in speakers, trained facilitators, interpreters, sign language interpreters?
- Do you need to get anything designed or printed beforehand? What about languages, large print or Braille?
- When reproducing anything, always check if there are copyright issues. If you are using any photographs, check if permission is needed to reproduce them (including parental\guardian consent if children or young people). Always quote\print the source of your material.
- How are you going to measure feedback?
- Do you need to design a feedback form or questionnaire? What questions should you ask? What about language or large print or audio requirements?
- Where will you build in time during the engagement process to enable everyone to submit feedback?
- What are you going to do with the feedback?

- How will you measure your outcomes?
- Do you need to design a monitoring and evaluation process and template?
- How will you be able to use your outcomes as evidence to support and develop the engagement work?

And finally

Community engagement is everyone's business, and doing it well can make the difference between a good outcome and a fantastic one.

JARGON AND DEFINITIONS

Try to be as clear and transparent as possible and use plain and simple language that everyone can understand. Agree what terms and definitions you are going to use and stick to them.

Here are some of the most common with suggested alternatives -

Jargon	Definition
Best practice	Best bits/Best work/Best results/Best ideas (things that have already been shown to work well)
Bottom up	From local people
Capacity	Ability/Size
Capacity building	Skilling up
Community engagement	Talking to local people
Consensual	Everyone agrees
Core message/Core value	Most important thing
Coterminous/Coterminosity	Common/Same boundaries
Cross-cutting	Working together (affecting several services or different communities)
Empowerment	Giving people the chance
Engagement	Discussions/Talks/Meetings
Engaging users	Talk to people
Evidence base	Proof/Research shows
External challenge	Issues/Problems/Tests to face
Facilitate	Make possible/Help/Aid/Assist
Framework	Outline
Good practice	Good bits/Good work/Good results/Good ideas
Income/Funding streams	Cash
Initiative	Idea/Plan/Proposals/Scheme
Level playing field	Equal/Give everyone the same chance
Multi-disciplinary	Many groups (with different skills) working together
Outcomes	Results
Output	Results
Partnerships	Work with each other
Pathfinder	Pioneering/Leading/Trailblazing
Priority	Main concern
Revenue streams	Cash
Risk based	Carefully judged
Scoping	Researching/Investigating/Studying
Signpost	Pointers
Stakeholder	Organisations/People
Strategic/Overarching	Big picture
Streamlined	Modernise/Update
Sustainable	Long term
Top down	From Central/Local government
Transparency	Clarity
Value added	Giving better value/More for your money
Vision	Idea/Plan/Report

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Information	Where to find it
Child and vulnerable adults protection	Criminal Records Bureau: www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk Independent Safeguarding Authority www.isa.gov.org.uk The vetting and barring scheme – http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/campaigns/Vetting/index.htm Department for Education – www.dfe.gov.uk
Conflict Resolution	Community Development Foundation www.cdf.org.uk & enter conflict resolution in search facility.
Community Development Foundation	www.cdf.org.uk
Community visioning	Canterbury City Council has produced a handbook about community visioning which is accessible in a PDF format. www.canterbury.gov.uk/authority/assets/communitydevelopment/community_visioning_handbook.pdf
Creating Excellence	www.creatingexcellence.org.uk
Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG)	www.communities.gov.uk
Federation for Community Development Learning Tools	www.fcdl.org.uk
Home Office: Community Engagement – Practical lessons from a pilot project	www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs07/dpr48.pdf
National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA)	www.navca.org.uk
Network of Empowering Authorities (NEA): 'Better Community Engagement and Empowerment	Online forums and communities of practice (CoP) www.communities.idea.gov.uk/welcome.do and then use the alphabetical search index for the Better Engagement and Empowerment CoP
NHS – Pacesetters Programme community engagement guide	www.dh.gov.uk/en/publicationsandstatistics/publications/publicationspolicyandguidance/DH_082382

North Somerset Partnership (NSP): 1. Safer & Stronger delivery partnership 2. Sustainable Community Strategy	www.northsomersetpartnership.co.uk
Participatory Appraisal	People and Participation website of Department for Communities & Local Government, Ministry of Justice and Sustainable Development Commission - http://www.peopleandparticipation.net/display/Methods/Participatory+Appraisal
Participatory budgeting	www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/news/check-out-our-interactive-toolkit-online
Planning For Real ®	Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation www.nif.org.uk www.communityplanning.net
Some examples of other community engagement toolkits	Newcastle-upon-Tyne http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/wwwfileroot/cxo/consultation/Engagementtoolkit.pdf Communities Scotland http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/scrcs_006693.hcsp
Urban Forum	www.urbanforum.org.uk
Other general sources of information and case studies	People and Participation.Net - includes a process planner tool, case studies and an online resource library www.peopleandparticipation.net Together We Can – has information, advice and links to other initiatives and useful case studies. http://togetherwecan.direct.gov.uk/ Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) – For People & Places engagement strategy. www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/community_engagement Greener events guide and checklist from Government Office South West (GOSW) www.oursouthwest.com/SusBus/gevents.html www.oursouthwest.com/SusBus/greener-events.pdf

EXAMPLES OF ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY BY ORGANISATIONS ACROSS NORTH SOMERSET

Twitter

- Various organisations including North Somerset Council and Avon and Somerset Police have twitter pages

North Somerset Council website

- A major source of information for officers, partners and the public about services and activities

Events

- Local Democracy Week - 2 day event, for groups of school children (all ages). Interactive activities demonstrating the sorts of work the council does (North Somerset Life, planning, budget setting)
- NSP Stakeholder Event
- NHS Stakeholder Event

Newsletters

Cheap and direct method of providing focussed policy and other information to:

- Community and Voluntary Sector
- North Somerset Partnership partners
- Elected Members
- Town and Parish Councils

Family Information Service

- Phone line and website
- Hundreds of contacts per month
- Every contact includes a satisfaction survey

Community Cafes

- A stallholder-style information and advice service taken into rural areas of specific or identified need. All aspects of council service is welcomed, and also includes the police, fire, health and JobCentre Plus
- They attract their target group of 50+ age but the small number of younger people has increased recently
- They aren't always accessible to everyone – they run from 10am-1pm, weekdays.
- They are trying to get PCSOs and Councillors at each meeting – they are very interested in this but in the case of PCSOs their shift patterns are a problem.
- “Stallholders” could be changed to attract different demographics but it would probably require a change to the timing of the events and possibly some kind of advertising.

Coffee Mornings

- Similar to the Community Cafes but piggyback on existing coffee mornings that other teams / organisations run for instance Winscombe Market.
- They are information sessions which are themed appropriately for the clientele, of which there tend to be many because they are already established.
- Sessions are themed, e.g. disabilities. Customers have said they prefer the variety

Consultation with public and partners on new housing-related strategies

- Use of E-consult and tenant / resident forums as well as representatives of effected groups
- Direct consultation with residents and stakeholders in areas near proposed new development

E-consult

- Online consultation software. Based on the North Somerset website
- Around 100 consultations per year of varying size
- 1200 people registered on E-consult
- Used by Town and Parish Councils

Annual Theatre User Survey

- Postal survey of theatre users

Over 50s BME Forum

- Set up in partnership with SREC
- 20 attendees per meeting. Membership is fluid. 40-50 people involved in total

Youth parliaments and youth councils

- Weston Federation Youth Parliament
- North Somerset Youth Parliament
- North Somerset Student Leadership Group
- Weston Town Youth Council

Roadshow activities and planning policy consultations

- Taking consultation out and about to draw more people into discussions about the future of their locality. Two objectives:
 - 1) Better policy
 - 2) Residents with a greater stake in, and knowledge of, what is going on in their area

Engagement with town and parish councils as champions of travel planning

- New initiative
- Objective is to change attitudes towards sustainable travel in order to increase take-up

Bristol Playbus

- Visits the traveller site in Hewish principally to work with the children but it also engages with their parents
- Includes health visitors and outreach for council services

Community Learning Teams engage directly and indirectly with groups with and via partners, Carlton Centre, School PTAs

- An active method is used to identify, engage and respond to need of local people
- In short they go out and ask people what they want then give it to them.
- They have a 6 week self-imposed target to lay on new courses after consultees have requested it.
- Includes free advice and guidance

Play Partnership

- 150 members including Councillors, voluntary sector, parents. Any interested stakeholder may also take part

South Ward: Community group reps being trained to make best use of their role as a partner

- Capacity building to ensure that communities have the tools and confidence necessary to play an effective part in all aspects of South Ward's development

South Ward: many active, empowered and effective community groups or forums with community representation

- Groups meet regularly, views of local people genuinely valued. Problems and issues tackled together
- Feedback is used to inform and shape services
- Residents gain an understanding of constraints placed on service providers

South Ward: Capital works and revenue projects designed with the community

- Projects designed in partnership with local people to address specific issues impacting on quality of life

Health-walks

- Entirely community-led. Council has been able to reduce its involvement.

Parish Planning

- Majority of parishes have, or are working towards, a Parish Plan
- Evidence shows that they have a powerful influence on public participation in local / civic life in their town or parish

Neighbourhood Watch

- Supported by the council and the police. Long standing initiative