

This is the fun part! Engaging with the wider community and thinking of creative ways to involve everyone, not just the 'usual suspects', is fundamental to the Community Led Planning process.

Where to start

You need to have a plan to involve different sections of the community in the process. This will include different age groups and people from all geographical areas of the community. You may want to involve businesses and visitors too.

People who don't readily come forward with their views can often hold very different views to the people who do. It's important to use a variety of consultation methods (at least three) to reach as many people as possible.

For most groups, this includes a questionnaire, but only using a questionnaire is always a bad idea. If you do, you'll only get the views of people who like to fill in questionnaires!

Some people may simply be put off by a written questionnaire or may have difficulty filling it out.

It's unrealistic to expect most people to come to meetings or events about the Plan. Instead, go to where people already meet anyway e.g. the pub, school gate, and organised groups and clubs. The local W.I., Toddler Groups, Youth Clubs and Sports Clubs for example, can provide an easy way to talk to a larger number of people.

Doing other types of consultation first will help you to ask the right questions in your questionnaire.

Keep track and keep talking

Keep a record of the people who participate with some simple statistics on the numbers involved, their approximate age and area they come from. Collecting this information gives credibility to your plan and helps you demonstrate to service providers you want to influence that you've taken an inclusive approach.

The secret to a really effective consultation is making sure everyone knows what's happening. Letting people know what you are doing and when, and thanking them for taking part is a key part of the process.

Key questions to ask

Asking the following questions before beginning consultation will help you decide what methods and techniques to use:

- Who are we consulting?
- What about?
- Why?
- Do people (and you!) understand the issues?
- When should it be done?
- How long will it take?
- Who interprets and sees the results?
- Are there any comparable results?
- What might happen as a consequence?

Plan your Plan!

- Plan your consultation; choose methods based on existing knowledge of your community.
- Be prepared to adapt your plans based on what's successful and what isn't.

Use a variety of methods

- Not everyone will want to express their views in the same way; may need different approaches
- Some people may need additional support to express their views.

Go to your community & keep talking

- Don't expect people to come to you; go to them by working with existing groups and events.
- It's essential to keep the wider community up to date with progress and next steps.

Methods and techniques

Tap into existing activity

Make a list of all your community's existing events, activities and communications so you can tap into what's already happening, rather than organising lots from scratch. As well as helping your consultation, this can help to keep people informed of what's happening as the Plan progresses.

Special Meeting

Invite everyone to a special event in a central, accessible location, with refreshments. Consider putting on an activity or workshops with facilitators to guide the discussion.

Informal questions

Meet people in the pub, outside the school or shop, or at events such as the local show or fete, with a short list of questions on a clipboard.

Coffee Morning or Lunches

Put on a coffee morning or lunch for people to talk informally in groups about their concerns for the community, or what they value about living there. Arrange for one person on each table to record the key comments and themes.

Quiz night

Put on a fundraising Quiz Night, including questions on what people would do to improve their community with £100, £1,000 and £10,000.



Consultation at 'Empowerment in Action' conference

Suggestion boxes

Place at strategic points around the area (pub, shop, village hall), and invite comments.

Youth work

Ask a local youth group or youth work organisation to do some consultation with young people. Try providing a paper graffiti wall and inviting comments on how they see their community.

Competition for schools

Ask primary school children to draw pictures of good and bad things about where they live, and what they would like to see.

Photography or art competition

Run a competition for all ages asking for pictures showing what they like best or would like to change most about the local area.

Walkabout

Arrange a group walk round the village / parish, recording their views on problem areas and ideas and opportunities for improvement.

'Then and Now' project

Working with a school or youth group, ask young people to talk to an older relative about their memories of life in the community. They can then report back to an open meeting, or the Steering Group, about what life was like then, how they feel about now, and what they would like for the future.



Bandleyside residents voting for projects at a Community Planning event

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ACT champions community and rural issues

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