Guidance/ Tools to Support

Community Engagement

Guidance / tools to support community engagement

What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement is about dialogue and building relationships with communities to enable a coming together. There are various reasons for undertaking engagement activities.

Engagement can be undertaken for the purpose of;

- Gathering insight and intelligence

- Involving people directly in the shaping and delivery of services

- Promoting community resilience, enabling individuals and communities to understand their communities and their conditions.

- Getting buy-in on the proposals from stakeholders.

Community engagement helps create safe, strong, cohesive and desirable communities, where there is social capital that promotes community spirit and pride. Successful community engagement helps and encourages people to take an active role within their communities, to help find solutions to local issues. In that it helps people reach their full potential.

Why Engage?

Early engagement will minimise resistance to your proposals as your audience will feel genuinely involved in the process and will therefore generate momentum for any further engagement activities.

Community engagement supports people to make informed choices and decisions about the communities they live in and their life style therein.

The success of your engagement activities will rely on how information is passed on through peer influences, inter-connected networks and how information is shared through these.

The success of your engagement is also reliant on how you communicate the information you have and to who.

<u>Principles for Engagement</u>

It is important to plan out and be clear of the reason why you need to engage, how you will engage and the resources you will need to deliver this plan successfully.

Outlined below are a few principals for successful engagement.

1. <u>Careful Planning and Preparation</u>

Careful planning that is inclusive is important. Clearly define the purpose of your engagement activities and outline the needs of your participants. This should influence the way you plan, design and organise your engagement activities.

2. <u>Inclusion and demographic diversity</u>

Include the views of diverse people, voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for quality outcomes and a democratic process.

3. <u>Collaboration and Shared purpose</u>

Support and encourage participants, stakeholders and the wider community to work together to advance the common good.

4. <u>Openness and Leaning</u>

Help all involved listening to each other, exploring new ideas, do not pre-determinate outcomes, learn and apply information in ways that generate new options, and rigorously evaluate public engagement activities for effectiveness.

5. <u>Transparency and Trust</u>

Be clear and open about the process, and provide a public record of the people who have organised and are carrying out the engagement, the partners involved, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed.

6. <u>Impact and Action</u>

Ensure each participatory effort has real potential to make a difference, and that participants are aware of that potential.

7. <u>Sustained engagement and participatory culture</u>

Promote a culture of participation and support ongoing quality of public engagement.

The table below will to help you to have a clear outline of your desired
goals/ambitions. It will also help you to understand why you will need to carry out
engagement activities and what the expectations on the community are.

Goals/Outcomes	Why Engage?	Roles for the Community

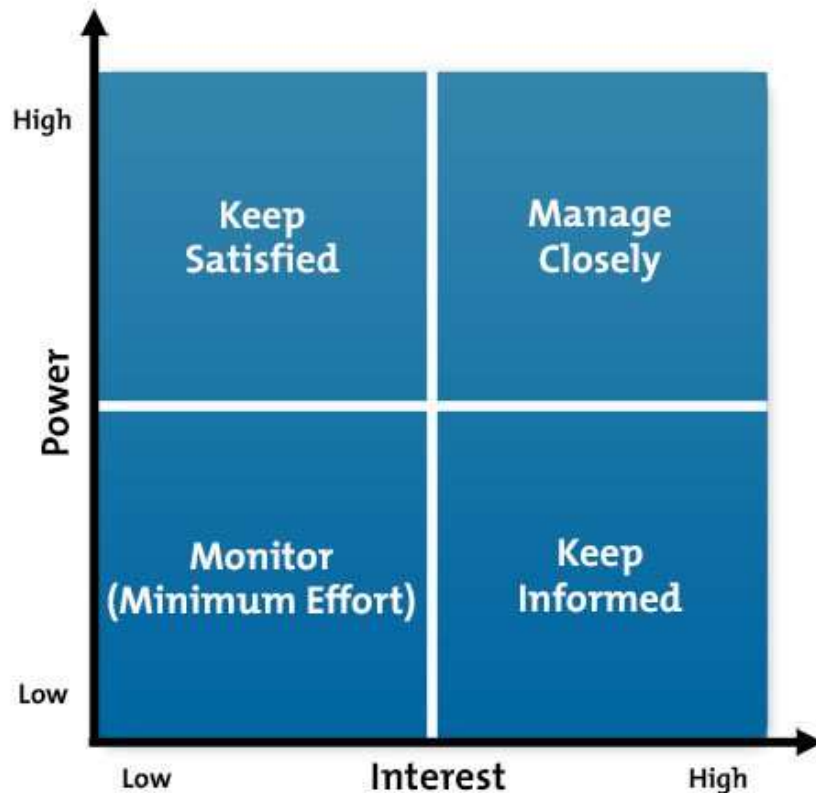## Identifying your Stakeholders and how to engage with them

It is both useful and important to understand the views of the people who are going to be both directly and indirectly impacted by the decision that is going to be made following the engagement.

Therefore key Questions that can help you identify your stakeholders are:

- Who is directly impacted by the work you are about to carry out.

- Who is indirectly impacted

- Who is potentially impacted

- Whose help is needed to make the decision

- Who knows about the subject

- Who has interest in the subject

Stakeholders will have power and influence over your proposals therefore engaging with these earlier on in the process and getting them on board will have a huge influence on the direction and success of your engagement plan/activities.

*** The grid below shows how one way of mapping your stakeholders and help make decisions as to how you will engage with the group.

The position that you locate to a stakeholder on the grid shows you the actions you need to take with them. Knowing how people will be impacted by your proposals will also help you to place people in appropriate categories and ascertain the level of engagement you will need to do with them.

Using the grid above;

1. High power, highly interested people (Manage Closely); you must engage these people, and make the greatest efforts to satisfy them.

2. High power, less interested people (keep Satisfied); put enough work in with these people to keep them satisfied, but not so much that they become bored with your message.

3. Low power, highly interested people (Keep Informed); adequately inform these people and talk to them to ensure that no major issues are arising. People in this category can often be very helpful with the detail of your project.

4. Low power, less interested people (Monitor); monitor these people but don't bore them with excessive communication.

- Identify how your stakeholders want to engage

- Identify the type of engagement that you want to achieve

- Review the processes, what works, what doesn't and what is missing

- Identify the resources available to you i.e communication channels, training opportunities, staff or volunteers, accessible data etc.

Below is a template to help you formulate your plan of action, this should also be able to paint a picture of the engagement methods that you are going to use and the resources that you will need.

Plan

Who do you need to communicate with (How do you rank their power and influence on your project)	When will you need to communicate with them	How will you communicate/ Methods of Communication?

Clarity and transparency at every level that you rank your stakeholders will make your results from your engagement activity more meaningful.

Planning your communication

Now that you have identified your stakeholders and outlined the level of engagement they will have. It is important to be clear about why you are approaching them and your intentions from the offset. This will help you establish were you need to focus your energy. Doing this will also help you to relay relevant information to relevant groups and stakeholders.

Inform	Listen	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
To provide information and to assist Stakeholders in understanding the proposals	To obtain feedback from stakeholders on options, issues or (potential) impact of the final decisions	To work with stakeholders and ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and are considered in the final decision making.	To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision making process, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision making in the hands of the public

Below are a number of ways that you can communicate and relay information on your proposals to your stakeholders. The level of communication will help determine the engagement activities and what you promise to do.

Forums	Surveys	Focus Groups	Focus Groups	Forums
Website	Website	Public Meetings	Advisory Board	Public Meetings
Public meetings Newsletters	Public meetings Questionnaires	Advisory Board	Co-production meetings	Advisory Board

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Supporting Engagement

It is important to understand the capacity that is required to deliver your identified community engagement activities. This may be in the form of staff and volunteer time, skills, liquid cash, equipment and venues. Having this to hand will help you to pay attention to any gaps that may present themselves for example need for training.

The template below will help you outline and identify areas were more capacity is needed.

Staff Time	
Skills Sets	
Organisational Culture Change	
Training of Staff, Volunteers.	
Professional Support/Partnerships	

Barriers to Engagement and Participation

To be able to deliver effective community engagement, it is important to consider what the barriers maybe to participation and what the mitigation measures would be.

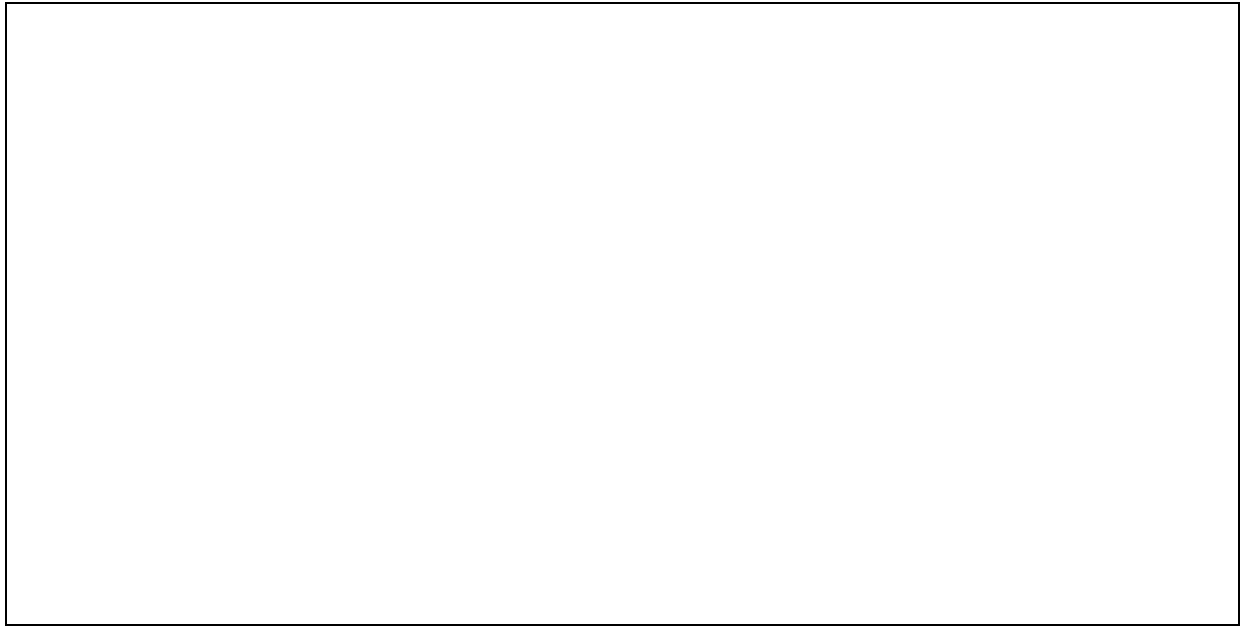| Potential Barriers to Consider	Design issues to consider	Mitigation
- The capacity and ability of different stakeholders to participate - Hard to reach groups such as young people, older people, minority groups or socially excluded groups - Isolation (how to these people get to know about the work you are doing). - Gaps in information - Literacy and numeracy levels of your participants - Divided communities - Not fully utilising various communication channels	- Techniques and engagement methods to be used. - Need for independent participation - Location and accessibility of the venue - The number and type of engagement events - Format and content of communication and publicity materials - Need for outreach activities where people have a chance for face to face contact and to ask questions.	

Being Inclusive

Be mindful to include the views of the minority people in your community, were their, voices, ideas, experiences and information can help shape and contribute towards your final goals.

This includes for example people with disabilities, older people, young people, and different ethnical backgrounds. Having representative views from your community helps you to make informed decisions and to tailor your work/project to the needs of your community better.

Do you feel you have the right mix to understand the issues from an equality and diversity perspective?

Have you tested interpretations and assumptions about your work with diverse stakeholders?

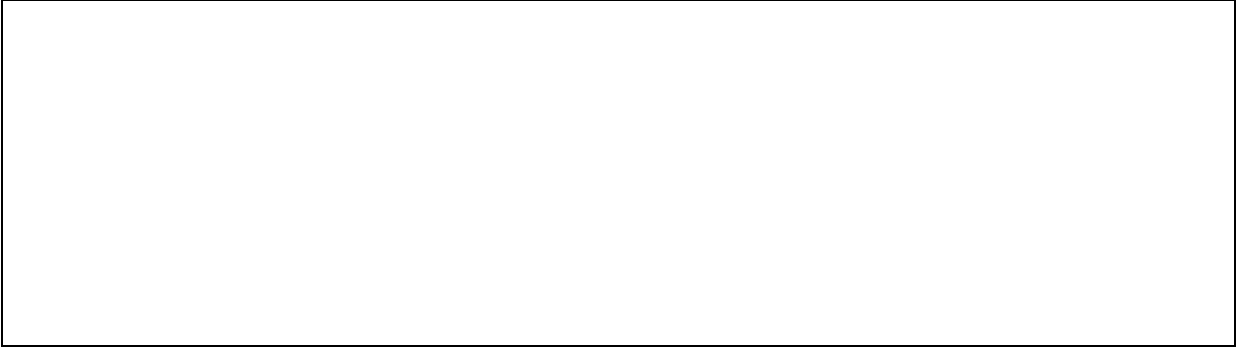**What's your perspective on the issue, what might be distorted?**

What else do you not know that is important for our desired result?

What conversations do you need to have to discuss the issue and the cause?

How else can you engage & what would make a difference

Engaging with Young People

Young people are also part of the community's fabric .Often when young people are engaged in their communities; there is more love and care for their community and the resources within them. It is useful to engage young people in designing and developing services for young people to be able to capture the young people's voice and to deliver a service that will be accessed and utilised by young people.

A few tips for successful engagement with young people;

Go to were the young people congregate (it is useful to go the young people's space as this will provide a sense of security and will enable them to participate). Don't underestimate the importance of timings. Consider evenings and weekend events.	Keep all activities and involvement informal. As being too formal might put off your young participants and intimidate them. Typical engagement events based in a village hall will not entice young people to get involved. You will need to think outside the box to get this age group to participate.
Utilise engagement mechanisms that are fun but include constructive learning or provide constructive outputs. For example the use of diversionary activities such as music, sport, games and the activities they want. Use the young people's experience of events they have attended to establish what has and has not worked, to be able to work smart and engage their age group.	Utilise the networks that these young people use, to reinforce your message. For example young people engaging with youth café's, other youth provisions and local schools. This will help with the issue of accessibility-make it as easy as possible for young people to engage by planning for any access issues that may arise. This does not mean location only, but also timings, cost of travel and length of the event.
Be mindful not to over promise and to deliver what you promise. Failure to deliver what you promise will make young people disengage, re-engagement may prove challenging after false promises.	Communicate your intensions widely. Use social media platforms that young people access.
Give young people ownership of engagement events. Let them take	Link with other organisations that are attempting something similar things or to

ownership of an idea or event by helping to spread the message and helping to get feedback.	engage with young people. Encourage open dialogue and freedom of expression.

A number of voluntary organisations within Leicestershire have resources to help with the development of community initiatives that positively engage young people.

Young Leicestershire is an organisation in Leicestershire that provides young people with a wide range of positive activities through leading and supporting voluntary-sector services.

To find out more about what Young Leicestershire offers please visit https://youngleicestershire.org.uk/#av_section_2

Case Study: Harborough Parishes together to commission services for young people

Harborough District Children's & Young People's Charity (HCYC) have worked together with local Parish Councils to develop a local young people's activity club in their Parish.

In recognition of the reduction in community youth services available in South Leicestershire, especially in the rural villages, HCYC established an opportunity for Parish Council's to work with us to develop a local young people's activity club in their Parish

This offer has enabled Parish Council's to become commissioners of the service which HCYC are able to provide. HCYC takes care of all staffing needs, including recruitment, training, and supervision and vetting of all staff, as well as activities preparation – from games, challenges, crafts, music and cooking among other activities. The Parish Councils provide or pay for a local venue - usually a village hall in the community. The HCYC staffs have the expertise and experience to bring high quality, sustainable, play and youth work into the communities, helping young people's views to be recognised locally and helping the Parish Council to communicate with their younger community members.

In 2016 HCYC were able to offer 3 Parishes the chance to have 75% of the costs met by a grant in the first year of operation, and 50% in the second year after a successful award from Harborough District Council's community grant fund. Other parishes are able to cover 100% of the costs through their access to local grants, e.g. local wind farm funding, or through the Parish Precepts. HCYC is able to offer advice to Parishes on potential sources of funding and fundraising options to help them find the revenue funding needed to commission the service.

In 2016 they operated three clubs (South Kilworth, Great Easton and Great Glen), with a fourth opening in Kibworth in October 2017, and a further club planned to open shortly in Lutterworth.

For more information visit https://en-gb.facebook.com/chilloutprojects/

Mandate

Now that you are clear on who is going to be impacted and how, and the engagement tools that are fit for purpose, develop a mandate that will help you plan out your project's engagement activities.

This will also help you to check if your activities and processes are in line with the overall aims and purpose of engagement.

Good practice is involving the local community from the very beginning of the process right to the end.

Below is a template to help you put your mandate together.

Mandate	
Identity (Identify the issue that you want to engage on)	
Targets for Involvement (Who do you want to involve)	
The Issue (What do you want to ask those you involve, how wide is the issue; is it whole organisation or applies to a specific project	
The Actor(Who is responsible for carrying out or implement what is decided	

Action (What will be done to implement what is decided)	
Dates (When will action be taken and feedback)	
Overall Objective (What would you like to achieve	

For more information and support;

Communities Team: 0116 305 7743

https://www.leicestershirecommunities.org.uk/

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